Rescue Elite Squad Season One

by MissShawnaAlice

Summary

This is an original work based off Rescue Special Ops, and involves an entirely original team. This does cross over with my Rescue Special Ops series, and will merge with it in later seasons.
Kezney Worthington sat in the corridor or Rescue Special Operations, main headquarters, waiting for Chantelle Gregory to see her. She had no idea why she was here, but a phone call to the station house in Perth where she was originally stationed, and she found herself on a plane to Sydney, references in hand. Kenzie was a tall girl, light brown hair, green eyes, and slightly Hispanic appearance. In place of her work uniform, she opted for a comfortable tee, jeans and converse. She was tense, not knowing what was coming. The office door opened, and she stood up quickly, scattering her papers everywhere.

“Oh!” She dropped to her knees, trying to gather them back up. Chantelle stood waiting, tapping her foot.

“I’m so sorry,” apologised Kenzie, standing up. Chantelle motioned for her to come inside, and Kenzie walked in nervously, and sat down in the chair in front of Chantelle’s desk. Chantelle seated herself quickly, sorting papers on her desk. Kenzie waited, but nothing happened. She broke the silence.

“Excuse me, can you tell me why I’m here?” Chantelle looked at her.

“You don’t know?” She said questioningly. Kenzie shook her head.

“No. I was just told I had to get here on the next flight, and to bring all my references and paperwork. Nothing else.” Chantelle nodded.

“Good. I’ve been trying to keep things quiet.”

“So are you going to tell me why I’m here?” Asked Kenzie. She felt like she was going in circles with Chantelle.

“Oh goodness, of course. You’ve been selected to be a part of a new squad here in Sydney. Vince Marchello’s teams can only do so much, and as this is a large city, we need a second squad. A younger, more elite team of people. You and five other members will meet your station co-ordinator, team leader, and then your new building. State of the art equipment and a lot of money has been put into this. You will work in tandem with Marchello’s team, but you will take the more intense rescues. I hear your speciality is rock-climbing and abseiling?” Kenzie nodded. A week ago, she’d been complaining to her station manager in Perth that she wasn’t feeling challenged in her job anymore, and maybe she should quit. No wonder Ryan had smiled at her when he told her to pack her bags and head to Sydney. Kenzie could feel the excitement growing inside her.

“Are you up to it?” Asked Chantelle, scribbling notes on a pad. Kenzie nodded.

“Oh my gosh, thank you so much for this opportunity,” said Kenzie, shaking Chantelle’s hand. Chantelle picked up an envelope off her desk, and handed it to Kenzie.

“This contains the address of the new building, the keys to your patrol, your identification card and your reimbursement for your flight over here.” Kenzie took the envelope carefully.

“Where is my patrol?” She asked, excitement almost overcoming her.

“Downstairs in the parking garage. Security will show you where. Any other questions?” Kenzie
shook her head.

“Thank you so much!” Kenzie walked out of Chantelle’s office, composed. As soon as she was outside the door, she let out a whoop of excitement, and took the stairs instead of the elevator. She got down to the parking garage, and peered around looking for the patrol.

“Kenzie Worthington?” Asked the security guard. She nodded. He pointed her over to a corner, and she could see the nose of the patrol. She nodded her thanks to the guard, smiling at him, and practically skipped over to it. She climbed in the front seat. It was the newest patrol out in the Rescue facilities. Perth was way behind. It was custom built to take all their equipment, had GPS, Bluetooth, radio, everything built in to it. It had the new car smell to it as well, and Kenzie knew that the department heads must have put a lot of money into this new venture. She pulled out of the garage and into the traffic. The GPS told her where to turn, and got her straight to the new building. Four other patrols and two cars sat in the parking lot, the newly painted building gleaming in the sunlight. She pulled into the empty space next to a canary yellow car, and blanched at the colour as she slammed her door. A man stood waiting at the door, arms folded.

“Kenzie Worthington?” He asked. She nodded. Everyone seemed to know her name today, yet she knew no-one. He extended a hand toward her.

“Mark Ramirez, station co-ordinator. Good to have you here, now the briefing can begin.” Kenzie followed him up the stairs, admiring the new building. Perth had nothing on this. Mark showed her the desk that she would now call her own, and she placed her handbag down. Everyone else was here. Kenzie’s cheeks flushed as she realised they were all waiting on her. A woman walked out of a nearby office.

“Mark, you didn’t tell me that everyone was here.” Everyone looked at her, expectantly as she faced them.

“Hi everyone, I’m Cassandra Parkes. You can all call me Cassie, and I’m the station manager here. You’ve all met Mark Ramirez, he’s the co-ordinator, and will take care of rostering and will manage your teams whilst you’re out on jobs. You’ve each been chosen because you excel in a particular field of Rescue. Kenzie Worthington, from Perth, is your team leader, and her field is rock-climbing and abseiling. Anna Hunt is an ace paramedic, and has been recruited from Darwin. Kieran Jackson is a specialist in defensive driving, and will always be chosen as driver if you need to get somewhere fast, and hails from Adelaide. Daniel De Luca, from Hobart, specialises in water rescues, and holds every water license known to man. Liam Gordon from Brisbane is a helicopter pilot, and will be your eyes in the air, and provide air transport if needed. And Chris Pike comes from Canberra, and has a unique speciality in closed environments. Pipes, tubes, small rooms, exceptionally hard Rescues, Chris is your man. While you are here, you will each learn from each other about different areas of Rescue, and increase your skill base. We will also be working from time to time with the regular squad, RSO Sydney, and Vince Marchello, Jess Turner and Cam Jackson keep that mob in line.” Anna raised her hand.

“So if they’re Rescue Special Operations, who are we?” She asked quietly. Cassie smiled at her.

“You are known as Rescue: Elite Squad. Welcome to the rest of your lives.” Kenzie looked around at her new team, unsure of what would happen with them. Mark handed out radios to each of them, giving them their call codes.

“As team leader, Kenzie, you’re Rescue Portable One. De Luca, two. Kieran, Three. Anna, Four. Liam, Five and Chris, Six. Today, as part of orientation, Cass has organised a training session with the two newbies from Rescue today. Andrea Taylor and Dylan Green will meet you guys here shortly, and go out with you, putting you through some paces.” Kenzie nodded. She felt slightly
overwhelmed with this. Team leader? Footsteps sounded up the stairs, and Dylan and Andy appeared.

“Dylan Green? Seriously? Mate,” said Liam, standing up. He slapped Dylan on the back, and then shook his hand. They were a part of the same unit in Brisbane.

“So you’re the guys we get to go train with today. Let’s do this!” The RES teams followed Andy and Dylan down stairs, and climbed into the patrols. Mark joined them. They were heading to the beach to trial the elite squad, and to see what they were capable of. They had been handpicked from everywhere in Australia, and had to be the best, but Mark had to see it for himself. The headed to a beach. Water rescues were a main component of rescue, along with cliffs, mountaineering, and so much more. Mark was especially interested to see De Luca’s performance in the water. The patrols pulled up into the parking lot near the beach, and each team grabbed their Rescue issue wetsuits, dashing off to the bathroom. Andy and Dylan were prepared for it, and were already dressed. Mark went up to them, and shook their hands.

“Mark Ramirez. Thanks for coming out today.” Andy shook her head.

“No problem. There’s something happening over at Sydney HQ at the moment, and we opted out to come see you guys. So what do you want us to do to them?” Asked Andy. Mark surveyed the area.

“You guys did training here a few weeks ago, yes?” Dylan bobbed his head.

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“What did you guys do?” Asked Mark. He was unfamiliar with the area, and didn’t want to put his team in danger.

“We swam out to the buoy, came back in, and did a sprint down the beach to the end.” Mark nodded, and grinned.

“I’m going to make them do double then.” Andy smiled, and the RES team came out in their matching wetsuits, looking distinctly uncomfortable. That is, except for Daniel. He felt free, like he was back home again. He raced down to the water’s edge where Mark, Andy and Dylan were waiting. The rest of the team followed with a little less enthusiasm, and gathered around.

“Right. You guys are going to swim out to that orange buoy, back in, run to the end of the beach and back, and then repeat.”

“Are you serious?” Asked Kenzie, looking at the distance they were expected to do. Daniel jiggled on the spot, anxious to get in. Mark smiled.

“Ready guys?” They nodded, readying themselves.

“Go!” Daniel was in the water before anybody else. He was built for this, thin but fast. He was way out ahead of everyone, slicing through the water like it wasn’t there. Andy was next, followed by Kenzie and Dylan. Daniel made it to the buoy first, and noticed something odd. There was someone just under the water, arms flailing in slow motion. Andy caught up to him, slightly breathless.

“What?” She asked, holding onto the buoy. Kenzie and Dylan stopped next. Mark watched his new team banking up near the buoy, and wondered what was going on. He paced the beach.

“There’s someone down there. I need to get to them!” Kenzie took charge.
“De Luca, go. Andy, Dylan, you guys are the next fastest swimmers. Get to shore and get Mark to ring an ambulance, quickly.” Andy nodded and she and Dylan headed to shore. Anna and Liam caught up next. Daniel hadn’t surfaced yet.

“Why did you stop?” Asked Anna, holding onto the buoy.

“There’s someone under the water.” De Luca surfaced with a young woman. She was limp in his arms, and Daniel put his arm around her. Kenzie directed the rest of the team to head back, and she and Daniel worked on bringing the young woman in. Andy and Dylan scrambled on to the shore.

“What’s going on?” asked Mark, waving his arms at the team who were now coming in.

“Daniel found someone under the water. You need to ring an ambulance, quickly,” said Andy, struggling for breath. She had pushed herself to get to shore, and was beginning to feel the effects. Kenzie and Dylan made it to the water’s edge, and dragged the girl along the sand. The others weren’t far behind them, and they clambered to the shore. Andy and Dylan ran up to their patrol, and pulled out a med-kit, defib and towels. They came back down the sand, bags bouncing. Andy started in, but Mark pulled her back.

“Let them do it. I know you guys can do it; Marchello never stops talking about his team. I need to see them do it.” Both Andy and Dylan nodded, and stepped back. Kenzie took charge of the team.

“Chris, take over compressions. Liam, towel her off. De Luca, dry yourself off. Kieran, bag her. Anna, get the defib ready.” Mark was impressed. Kenzie was living up to his expectations. Organised, takes charge easily, relegates tasks, she was a dream employee. Liam finished towelling the girl off, and Anna attached the defib pads to her chest.

“Clear!” She called. The team leant back as Anna depressed the button. The girls back arched, and she dropped down onto the sand again. Chris put his hands back on her sternum, and continued the compressions. Daniel watched over Kenzie’s shoulder, and Kieran kept up the oxygen up. Anna watched the numbers countdown on the defib machine, and Liam stood away from the group, towelling himself dry. Anna checked the machine. It was ready.

“Clear!” The pulse coursed through the wires, and into the girl’s chest. The team waited, watched with bated breath. She started coughing, and they all sighed in relief.

“On her side, into recovery,” said Anna as the team gently rolled her over. She coughed up what seemed to be gallons of seawater, gasping in air. As she eased, Anna hooked an oxygen mask over the girls face.

“Just breathe,” she instructed. Mark was proud of his new team. They performed even better than he first expected. The ambulance pulled up into the carpark, and three paramedics made their way down, body board with them. Anna filled them in on the girls status, and they took her away quickly. Anna gratefully accepted a towel from Andy, drying herself off.

“Do we need to finish?” Asked Kenzie. Mark shook his head.

“No. You guys were amazing out there. I’m proud to call you my team. Marchello’s going to have a fit.” Mark turned to Andy and Dylan.

“Thanks for coming out today. We’ll have to get our units together to meet. Pass on the message to Marchello?” Andy and Dylan nodded, and trudged up the sand to their patrol, and left. Kenzie dried her hair off, looking at Mark.

“So what do we do now?” She asked. Protocol had been lax in Perth. When you’re the only Rescue
unit for miles around, and head office doesn’t check in very often, you don’t tend to keep up with paperwork. Mark smiled.

“Paperwork.”

Kenzie leant back in her chair, stretching. Her hand was cramped from writing the incident report, and she ached all over from the swimming she’d done. Daniel was behind her, and grabbed her hands.

“What’s up with you?” He asked, turning her around.

“I’m so tired now. A flight to Sydney, meeting in head office, and then a 2km swim and a rescue? I’m just exhausted.” Daniel laughed.

“How come you’re not tired?” Asked Kenzie, leaning forward. De Luca looked like he was hopped up on coffee.

“Kenzie, I used to do this for fun. Used to be an Olympic rated swimmer. I’ve swum the English channel, done ridiculously long marathons. I’m built for this.” Kenzie looked at him.

“Why did you stop?” She asked.

“It was during a surf contest. My best friend and I were competing, and he fell off his board, and broke his neck. The first aid staff on the beach didn’t realise, so instead of keeping him immobile, they moved him. Severed his spinal cord, and he died on the beach in front of me. After going off the rails, I found myself being rescued by RSO in Hobart after I drowned. Those guys were like angels in disguise, and I trained up to become one of them. Specialised in water, because that’s where I was best.” Daniel turned back to his computer, and then back to Kenzie.


“I didn’t choose Rescue; it chose me. I was in year twelve in high school, and was forver climbing weird things – school buildings, scaffolding, trees, rocks, cliffs. You name it, I’ve probably climbed it. As soon as I was eighteen, Georgia Willow from Perth Unit came and spoke to my parents. They’d never seen anyone with such talent for climbing things. They put me through a few tests and things, and I whipped all the employed members of Rescue. Fast forward through training and a year at Rescue, and here I am at nineteen, in Sydney, working with an elite speciality group.”

Anna came up the stairs, twisting her strawberry blond hair back into a neat bun.

“Who’s nineteen?” She asked. Kenzie raised her hand.


“Thanks.”

“So what about you Anna? How did you get into Rescue?” Daniel asked.

“I sort of fell into it. Up in Darwin, we had dozens of paramedics, but few people involved in Rescue. I was always left feeling unchallenged when we did our paramedical duties, so I transferred. Aced all the performance tests, and found myself on the payroll the next day. Little bit insane actually.” Kenzie nodded.

“Have you heard any stories about the other Sydney crew? What they’re like and such?” Daniel nodded.
“I’ve heard that they’re near unbeatable. Their team leader, Dean Gallagher, is a force to be reckoned with. He just has the powerful presence about him. You do too actually Kenz. Lara Knight,” Daniel turned to his computer, checking details.

“Oops, Lara Gallagher is pretty intense too. Do you guys remember the video on the news of the Rescue Officer who jumped over to some building, and it looked near impossible?” The two girls nodded.

“That’s her. Jordan Zwitkowski used to be a famous street racer until he stopped. He married Heidi Wilson in the team. Lachie Gallagher is a former SAS trained recruit, and he’s intense to watch. I saw their trials earlier this month when I was at that beach. Kate Marchello, Vince’s daughter, is just incredible to watch. She was built to be in Rescue, predetermined by her genetics, and her Dad’s influence. Chase Gallagher…” Daniel trailed off.

“What about Chase?” Asked Kenzie. Google was a wonderful tool to be able to find out about their teams. That and the intranet the entire Rescue network was connected to.

“Chase Gallagher was terminated from his position at Rescue. Oh. Well, no Chase. Dylan and Andy are the two newbies at the station, part of the transfer program. They’ll leave for a few weeks unless Michelle decides they should stay.” Anna looked at Kenzie.

“Did Mark say something earlier about a Cam Jackson?” Asked Anna. Mark selected a new link, and tapped out a few keys.

“Cam Jackson. Former LifeBlood employee, left them after an accident that left him paralysed, disappeared from the radar for a while, ended up in Wagga Unit, and Vince had him transferred here to do Michelle’s job. I wonder wh…” Daniel trailed off as he read more notes. Kenzie worried about whether they should be doing this.

“What?” Asked Anna quietly.

“Michelle is currently on sick leave. She has cancer.” Kenzie felt for Marchello’s team. No wonder they needed help.

“So when do we meet them?” Asked Kenzie. Mark and Cassie stepped out of her office.

“In two weeks. You’re all going on a hike together, to get to know your sister team.”

Mark sat in his office the next day, staring at his computer. They’d been active for almost twenty-four hours, and Head Office was giving them all Marchello’s call-outs for the next two weeks whilst they were on long service leave. It’s fair, he reasoned. Liam came into the office, and sat on his desk chair, which promptly gave way underneath him. He fell on the floor.

“What the…?” Chris appeared from around the corner, clutching his sides as he laughed at Liam sitting on the floor.

“Gotcha,” he said, sitting on his own desk chair. He logged on to the computer, and watched as Liam picked himself up on the floor.

“I’ll get you back,” Liam said, pointing to Chris. He grabbed the chair at the spare desk, and dragged it over to his own. Kenzie came up the stairs.

“What’s going on?” She asked, placing her bag inside her locker, and sitting at her own desk.
“Just Chris trying to be funny,” said Liam, focussing on his screen. Mark’s phone rang as Anna and Kieran came up the stairs, followed by Daniel. He listened quietly, and then hung up.

“Kenz, you’re up. We’ve got a man trapped on the side of a cliff, leg caught under some rock. Anna, Kieran, De Luca, you go with her. Liam, Chris, you guys can stay here and clean up the mess that Chris made after dismantling Liam’s chair.” Both males grumbled, but stayed where they were. Kenzie grabbed her personal harness set, and Daniel grabbed the medi-kits, tossing them into the back of their patrol. Anna and Chris grabbed the A-frame, shoving it into the back of their own patrol. Kenzie waved her hand, and the team left, speeding out of the bay. She let Daniel drive to rescue’s, until she was a fully licensed driver. He skidded to a halt near a cliff, GPS telling him it was the right one. Anna and Kieran pulled in just next to him, and pulled out the frames and harness sets. Daniel laid down, looking over the edge.

“Hello?” He called, peering down.

“Help! I’m trapped here, you’ve got to get me out!” Kenzie walked along the ridge, and found an anchor point. She drove the spike into the ground, ignoring the cries of the man.

“You’re okay, we’re coming down to get you. Can you tell me your name?” Said Daniel, trying to get a visual on the man.

“Michael Wright, please, you’ve got to get me out.” Daniel got up.

“Everyone’s in a rush,” Daniel mumbled under his breath. Anna and Kieran set up the frame, and Daniel grabbed his harness set.

“I’m coming down!” Called Kenzie, abseiling down carefully. She made it down to the man quickly, and he was trembling slightly. He was trapped in a rock cavity, leg trapped under some heavy fallen rock. Kenzie looked at it carefully, and knew she would need help. She grabbed her radio.

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Two. Daniel, can you bring a crowbar down? We’re not going to be able to shift the rock by ourselves,” said Kenzie. She pulled a green whistle out of her pack, handing it to the man. He inhaled greedily, and exhaled with relief.

“Rescue Portable Two to Rescue Portable One, yeah. I’ll bring one down. Two minutes.” Kenzie climbed into the tiny cavern space, and checked the man over. She was pretty sure he had a crush injury to his leg, and she set up a sodium bicarbonate solution, setting it aside carefully.

“Michael, yes?” He nodded numbly, happiness filling his entire being.

“Yeah, I’m Michael.” She nodded.

“What were you doing down here?” She asked. She saw ropes being dropped past them, and knew Daniel would be here soon.

“I… saw a girl… she jumped over the edge.” Daniel appeared at the entrance.

“You need this Kenz?” He asked, handing her a crowbar. She flashed a smile at him, and wedged it under the rock, she motioned Daniel to come in closer.

“I need you to lift it, so I can administer the sodium bic solution. He’s got a crush injury, and if we move the rock, he’s going to get a massive dose of potassium.” Daniel nodded, and readied himself.
"You good?" She nodded, and he started to lift the heavy rock. The man started to seize, but Kenzie kept a hold of him. She inserted the needle into his arm, and injected the solution. His convulsions slowed, and she strapped an oxygen mask to his face. With a grunt, Daniel rolled the rock out of harm’s way. Daniel stepped in to the cave, and Kenzie stepped out, dangling outside. Daniel dragged his medi-kit in, and splinted the man’s leg. He’d fallen unconscious, the pain unbearable for him. Kenzie grabbed her radio.

"Rescue Portable One to Rescue Base. Mark, I’m going to need Chris and Liam out here, ASAP." Her radio crackled.

"Rescue Base to Rescue Portable One. Why is that Kenz? What’s going on?" Asked Mark, pacing his office. Cassie joined him.

“Our patient saw a girl jump over the edge, and he tried to climb down to get her, and ended up trapped. We need the other two to help us search, can you send them over?" Cassie ran out of the office.

“Liam, Chris. Head out to the cliff with your kits and harness sets. Kenz needs your help to search for a girl who’s gone over the edge of the cliff.” The boys high-fived, and ran down the stairs, grabbing their kits, and climbing into the patrol, tires squealing as they accelerated out of the garage. Cass returned to the office, and nodded to Mark.

“Kenzie, they’re on their way. Any sign of her yet?” Kenzie leant out from the edge, trying to see if she could see anything.

“No. Nothing yet Mark. What’s their ETA?” Mark looked at his watch.

“About three minutes.” Kenzie exhaled, frustrated.

“Okay, thanks Mark. Rescue Portable One out. Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Three and Four, have you guys got the stretcher ready?”

“Rescue One, we’re ready. Lowering now.” The stretcher bumped down the side of the rock, and stopped in front of the entrance to the tiny cave. Daniel and Kenzie loaded Michael onto the stretcher, strapping him in.

“Go up with him,” said Kenzie. Daniel looked at her.

“What about you?” He asked, concerned.

“I’m going down. We have to find that girl.” Kenzie dropped lower carefully, trying to see if she could see the young woman. Chris and Liam arrived quickly, spraying rocks and sand everywhere as they skidded to a halt at the top of the cliff.

“Has she found her yet?” Asked Liam, stepping out of the car. Daniel shook his head.

“Nope, not yet.” Liam nodded, laying down to peer over the edge. Chris pulled out his harness, and anchored his ropes. He tugged the harness up his legs, securing it. He leant over the edge.

“What are you doing?” Asked Daniel.

“Going to help her,” answered Chris.

“Shouldn’t you ask her?” Chris shrugged his shoulders, and disappeared over the edge. Daniel sighed and grabbed his radio.
“Rescue Portable Two to Rescue Portable One, Chris is travelling to you now.”

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Two. What? I didn’t say I wanted you guys down here yet,” Kenzie responded, annoyed. She heard Chris’s lines whiz past her, and Chris came down, stopping next to her.

“Found the girl yet?” He asked. Kenzie glared at him.

“You’re supposed to wait for my instruction. Did you even check if your line was secured properly?” Chris shrugged again, and abseiled further down. A shower of rocks hit Kenzie in the face, and she covered her eyes.

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Two, De Luca, what’s going on up there?” She asked. A crackling sound was heard, and then a feminine voice came through.

“Kenz, Chris’s line just slipped. Daniel and Kieran are holding him up. Hurry up and get him down!” Kenzie sighed. Of course it wasn’t secured properly. She moved quickly down the cliff.

“Chris, hurry up and get down, and undo the ropes,” she called.

“Why?” Chris’s voice floated up the cliff.

“Because if you don’t, you’ll end up being dropped onto the rocks.” She heard his line being released. She released her own, falling in a controlled release, and landed on the rocks next to him. She undid his ropes, and grabbed her radio.

“Anna, the boys can relax. Chris is on the ground.” Chris’s ropes fell to the ground. Kenzie whipped around.

“Don’t ever do that again without my permission, or I’ll have you on report to Cassie, right?” Chris nodded. Kenzie hoisted her pack over her shoulder, and moved around the jagged rocks carefully. Chris followed.

“Who are we looking for?” He asked.

“We just know a girl jumped. We don’t even know if she’s down here,” said Kenzie, side stepping a loose rock. Chris surged forward.

“What is that?” He asked, moving around her and stepping forward. A crumpled mass was laying on the rocks, a trickle of blood seeping down the damp rock. Chris and Kenzie dashed towards the body, and Kenz pressed two fingers to the body’s neck.

“She’s alive,” said Kenzie, breathing a sigh of relief. She checked her over, and grabbed her radio.

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Five, how quick do you think you can get back to HQ and the helipad?” Asked Kenzie.

“Probably five minutes to get there, two to get the copter warmed up, and three, maybe four minutes to get back. Why?” Queried Liam. Kenzie glanced at the girl.

“We found her, and she’s going to need air transport to the hospital. She’s not looking good, and it’s going to take everything we’ve got down here to keep her stable.”

“Okay, I’ll head there now,” said Liam. He climbed into the patrol, and floored it out of the
carpark, heading back to rescue.

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Portable Two. Daniel, can you send Anna down? I think we’re going to need her medical expertise.” A silence followed.

“Daniel?” He cleared his throat.

“We didn’t bring the harness’s over for the rest of us, and Liam drove away with the extra harness in the back of his patrol.” Kenzie kicked a loose rock, frustrated.

“Fine, we can manage.” Kenzie dropped her radio.

“We need to get her off the rock, lay her flat.” Chris nodded, and working together, they moved her to a flatter spot. Kenzie held the girl’s neck still as Chris fished a collar out of his medical kit. He wrapped it carefully around the girl’s neck, and secured it, double-checking this time. Kenzie let go of the girl’s head, and checked the laceration on her forehead.

“Superficial cut, nothing bad. Where’s the main bleed?” Questioned Kenz under her breath. Chris felt one of the girl’s wrists, and she flinched.

“Query break here. It doesn’t feel broken. Possible fracture?” He asked.

“Strap,” said Kenzie, moving down the girl’s body, feeling over the girl’s abdomen. She gasped.

“Please, don’t,” she whispered, trying to relax.

“I think she’s ruptured her spleen. Liam better hurry up,” said Kenzie quietly.

“Miss, can you tell me your name?” Asked Chris, trying to keep her talking.

“Emily… Emily Moore.” She coughed. Blood stained her lips, and Chris glanced at Kenzie, who motioned for him to keep talking.

“Emily, what were you doing out here? Someone said you jumped.” She tried to nod, and found she couldn’t.

“I had to get away…” She whispered. Chris looked confused.

“Get away from who?” He asked.

“The man. He was chasing me. He wanted me, tried to have his way with me.” She coughed again, and winced. Chris looked up at Kenzie.

“Michael?” She grabbed her radio.

“Rescue Portable One to Rescue Base, Mark, get a hold of the police. Michael Wright, the man we rescued, tried to assault the girl. That’s why she jumped.” Mark scattered papers on his desk.

“Rescue Base, copy that Kenzie. I’ll let them know.” Kenzie heard the familiar noise of chopper blades cutting through the air, and could have cheered for joy at the fact that Liam was here. He navigated the tricky cliff easily. Cassie was in the chopper with him, and lowered the stretcher and harness down to them. Chris and Kenzie transferred Emily carefully onto the stretcher.


“Go. I’ll take your rope up, and pack up.” Chris attached himself to the line. Kenzie double-
checked, making sure he was secure, and tugged the line. Cassie reeled in the line smoothly, and Chris and Emily moved upwards. Kenzie walked back to where her ropes were, and started her ascent up the cliff, grumbling to herself.

“Men.” Kenzie climbed back up the cliff carefully, Chris’s ropes hooked over her shoulder. As she climbed up the top of the cliff, she hoped a helping hand would be there to pull her up. None came though, and she hauled herself up. Daniel, Kieran and Anna were staring at the sky as Liam manoeuvred the helicopter away from the site. Kenzie opened the back of the patrol, and threw Chris’s ropes in forcefully in to the back of the patrol. She was angry that he had ignored her authority as team leader, and instead of asking her if he was needed, just climbed down the cliff face instead. Daniel heard her, and brought over her ropes, handing them to Kenzie.

“What’s up with you?” He asked, grabbing the medi-kits off the ground, and sliding them in.

“Chris. He shouldn’t have come down. He should have asked if he was needed.” Daniel nodded.

“Was he needed?” He asked quietly.

“Yes, De Luca, he was. The point is, as team leader, he should ask.” She threw her own coiled ropes into the patrol, and slammed the door shut. Daniel stepped back, hands raised.

“Look, I know he was out of line, but you did need him to help you. You can’t complain too much.” Kenzie growled at him, and pulled open the driver side door. Daniel glanced at her.

“Should you…”

“Yes Daniel, I’m going to drive. I have a licence, I can drive.” Daniel knew she was in a bad mood, and left it at that, climbing into the passenger side. Anna and Kieran watched the interaction between Kenzie and Daniel, and then returned to packing up the frame, putting it carefully in their patrol. They climbed into the patrol, and headed back to base. When they got there, they could hear shouting in Marks office.

“I guess Kenzie and Daniel are back,” commented Anna, unloading gear from their patrol, and putting it away carefully. Kieran helped her, and set up the ropes to clean them. He knew Mark or Cassie would ask eventually ask, and if it was done, it would make life easy. It was his old job when he was working with the Adelaide Unit. Anna checked the medi-kits, and restocked some of them with splints, saline and new gauze pads. The shouting continued upstairs.

“Kenzie must be annoyed.”

“If people aren’t going to listen to me, then why did you make me team leader?” Asked Kenzie, frustrated. Mark stood on the other side of the room, opposing her.

“Because you are the perfect person for this job. You’re confident, in control, can handle a difficult situation easily. I’ve read all your reports, seen your supervisor’s reports on incidents, and I’ve read your evaluation forms from your station manager and the co-ordinator. You’re good Kenzie, that’s why you were recruited for this job.” Kenzie slammed her hands on the table.

“Then why did it happen today? Why did Chris ignore my authority as team leader, not ask where he was needed, and just do what he wanted?” Mark was at a loss.

“I don’t know. It’ll go on his report.” Kenzie raised her arms in frustration, and stormed out of the room. Mark held his head in his hands. Maybe nineteen was too young to recruit new members, and to put the weight of a team on her shoulders. She needed time to mature, to find herself in the
Kenzie hid in the shower room, drawing her legs to her chest as she cried silently. She was supposed to be strong, but she didn’t know what to do. She felt a hand on her back, and looked up, trying to hide the tears. Daniel settled himself next to her, and wrapped an arm around her.

“Everything okay?” He asked quietly. She shook her head.

“I don’t know if I’m ready to do this. I can’t control a team, look at what Chris did today. If you guys hadn’t of grabbed his rope, we could have lost a team member. We’ve only been active for twenty-four hours, and we could have lost a team member. That doesn’t look good for me! Maybe I’m not ready for this, maybe I should have refused.” Daniel put a finger to her lips.

“Shh. Don’t say that. You’re talented at rescue, and you’ve got a love for climbing and abseiling. You’re a confident young woman, and you deserve to be here. I’ll help you keep Chris in order. He’s not used to a female being in charge. Canberra unit is an all-male, testosterone filled environment. He’s had to get used to a female being his team leader and station manager, and to be honest, I don’t think he’s too fond of the idea.” Kenzie nodded, wiping her eyes on her sleeve. She looked at Daniel.

“Thanks Daniel.” He helped her up, and she dusted herself down.

“Anytime Kenz. I’ve got reports to do, you okay?” She nodded, and he left. Maybe she was meant to be here, she reasoned. She loved climbing, loved to abseil, even loved rescuing people. If she stayed, she could learn more about water rescue, bush rescues, everything. Even brush up on her first aid skills. Anna would probably help her if she asked. She looked at herself in the mirror, and washed her face down with cold water.

“I can do this. I’m good enough for this,” she said quietly, and walked out of the shower room over to her locker. She pulled on the stiff door, trying to open it. The door gave way, and talcum powder showered out, covering Kenzie in a thick white layer. Kenzie shrieked as she brushed it out of her eyes. Anna heard her cry and came running to the locker room. She covered her mouth as she saw Kenzie standing in a cloud of powder, and tried to hide a giggle. Kenzie could feel her blood pressure rising, and she clenched her fist’s angrily.

“CHRIS!!”
Episode 2/3: Antagonist Alliance

Episode Two/Three – Antagonist Alliance.

Vince sat in Mark’s office, maps strewn over the table, co-ordinates scribbled everywhere.

“So we’ll have them go down here, move up the side here. Maybe take this route, Kenzie can run them through some training, both on the way and back.” Vince nodded to Mark, and leant forward.

“Don’t take that one, it’s a sheer drop over the side.” Mark crossed out one of the lines, and leant back in his chair.

“Think we’re ready for this?” He asked. Vince chuckled.

“Mate, we’re ready. It’s the teams that are going to struggle with this. Have you sorted out the pairs yet?” Mark pulled open his desk drawer, and took out a slip of paper.

“Yeah. You said Andy and Lara aren’t going, didn’t you?” Vince nodded.

“We’ll organise something else later on. Lara’s asked for time off this weekend to spend with her daughter Mikayla, and Michelle’s son James, and Andy doesn’t need to go, she’s completed all her hikes, and she’s done a training session with you already.” Mark glanced at his list.

“Okay, as team leaders, I’ve paired Dean and Kenz together, Jordan and De Luca, Heidi and Anna, Lachie and Kieran, Kate and Chris, and Dylan and Liam.” Mark looked up at Vince.

“Sound okay to you?” He asked. Vince nodded.

“Sounds fine to me. I’ll head home and grab my pack, and I’ll meet you at RSO headquarters tomorrow, 0900 hours.”

Kenzie ran around the block and down to the beach, enjoying the wind in her hair. She was looking forward to the hike today, but was still nervous. The Gallagher brothers were a force to be reckoned with, and she was worried she wouldn’t live up to expectations. She knew Kate Marchello was around her age, but she grew up with her father in the same business. She was concerned she wouldn’t live up to them. She continued across the sand, and then turned for home. She needed to pack her bags and be ready for this trip. At least Daniel was going with her. He’d help keep the boys in line, but he’d do it nicely. She was trying to pull them into order, but they weren’t always receptive towards her. She unlocked her front door, and headed straight to the shower. As she lathered up, she thought about Daniel, and she felt her cheeks grow warm. He was definitely good-looking, but would he ever go for a girl like her? He was twenty-four, and probably interested in other girls. She dismissed the thought from her mind. No, Daniel would never be interested in her.

Anna woke up the next morning, and showered quickly. The male in the bed with her yawned, and looked at her groggily as she towel dried her hair, his dark hair messily covering his eyes.

“Morning sleepy-head. Do you want some breakfast?” He nodded, and threw back the covers, getting out of Anna’s bed. She wrapped her arms around his waist, and stretched up for a kiss. He smiled, and Anna laughed. She grabbed his hand and dragged him into the kitchen. He grabbed her around the middle, tickling her, and kissed her again. She squealed a little, and tried to get away.
Liam packed his bag carefully. Dylan had called him the night before, and they were preparing to prank some of the teams whilst on the hike. Gentle, harmless pranks, but pranks all the same. Chris was involved with their planning as well, and they had big things planned. He grabbed his now packed bag, and climbed into his patrol, heading to RES to pick up his medi-kit and tent, before heading over to RSO. He picked up Chris along the way.

“Hey, you got the stuff?” Liam nodded.

“Yeah, packed my bag ten minutes ago. You got yours?” Liam asked, pulling into the traffic. Chris nodded, his face lighting up.

“This is going to be fun!”

The Elite Squad met at their base, and each tossed their medi-kits into the back of the three patrols. Daniel appeared behind Kenzie, and tickled her. She squealed, and turned, thinking it was Liam. She quietened quickly when she realised it was Daniel.

“You feeling better this week?” He asked. Kenzie nodded.

“You ready to take on the world?” She smiled a little, and shook her head.

“No, but I’ll give it a go. I’m nervous about these Gallagher brothers though. They’re tough, and they’ve been doing this for a while. What if I’m not good enough?” She asked, tossing in the bag of tent posts. Daniel laughed.

“You? Not measure up to one of them? Kenz, you climb like no other person I’ve ever seen, and your skills are exceptional. You’re only nineteen, and look at what you’re doing! Don’t try and measure up to the brothers; you’ll find yourself getting depressed. You’re fine the way you are.” Kenzie slammed the back door shut.

“Thanks Daniel. You ready for this?” He nodded.

“Let’s take them on!” The RES team pulled out and headed down the road to the RSO base. They turned into the driveway, and turned off the engines, the silence deafening. Mark climbed out, and entered the garage first, his pack slung lightly over his shoulder. He and Vince shook hands, and the rest of the team trickled in, nervous about meeting everyone. Kenzie stood back a little, intimidated by all the people staring at them.

“RES, meet RSO. You’ll be put into teams,” said Mark. Instantly, everyone in the room gravitated towards their ideal partner, the one they were usually paired with on rescues. Vince chuckled, and shook his head.

“No, no regular teams today. No, Mark and I have arranged your teams for you, and there is no backing out of them.” Dean and Kenzie stared at their leaders, shock across their faces.

“What?” Kenzie glared at Mark, and he came over closer.

“Mark, don’t do this. We haven’t even worked out how we work with our own partners, and you want us to work with someone we’ve never worked with before?” Whispered Kenzie. Mark nodded, and stepped back. Vince was answering Dean’s question.
“I know, that’s why we’re mixing teams.” Vince glanced at Mark, who took the lead.

“Exactly. You need to be able to work with other members, from other units. Hence this weekend’s exercise. Each Ops member will be paired with a squad member. No changing teams, or complaining about it. Before we go, each of you are to get to know your partner before we leave.”

Mark looked back at Vince, who grabbed the list from his desk, and read it out.

“Dean Gallagher, you’re with Kenzie Worthington. Jordan Zwitkowski, Daniel De Luca. Heidi Zwitkowski, Anna Hunt. Lachie Gallagher, Kieran Jackson. Kate Marchello, Chris Pike. Dylan Green, you’re paired with Liam Gordon. Take five, ten minutes to acquaint yourself with your partner, and then we’ll head out.” Kenz headed over to Dean, nervousness making her tremble like a leaf. He held out a hand.

“Kenzie Worthington?” He asked. She nodded, and shook his hand.

“You’re Dean Gallagher,” she whispered. Dean laughed. He could tell straight away that she was tense around him.

“Yes, I am. And you’re Kenzie. Glad we worked that one out. How are you?” He asked, trying to make her comfortable. She smiled a little.

“A bit nervous about today. I mean, I’m working with a Gallagher! You guys are like celebrities at every station, and we all strive to have the same sort of dedication and work ethic that you guys have.” Dean smiled at her.

“That’s great. So what sort of Rescue’s do you specialise in? I know all of you have a specialty, so what’s yours?” Kenzie smiled shyly.

“I love climbing. Rock climbing, buildings, abseiling, anything that involves climbing up a wall, or abseiling down. It’s kind of been my favourite thing to do, ever since high school. Perth Unit recruited me after I bested all their original units times. After that, I’ve been working there since I was seventeen, and two years on, I find myself here in Sydney, working in an Elite Squad.” Dean was astounded.

“So you ready to hike?”

Anna looked at Heidi.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” She asked. Heidi nodded.

“I’m fine, it’s just a little cold,” coughed Heidi. Anna looked at her, eyebrow raised. She knew it wasn’t just a little cold. It could turn into something full blown, something worse if she wasn’t careful. Heidi saw the raised eyebrow, and her shoulders sank.

“look, I know it’s not just a cold, but if I don’t do this hike Vince will kill me. I like being alive!” Anna laughed at her. She would have done the same thing in her unit when she was in Darwin. Kelly Trainor worked her unit hard in Darwin, and Anna secretly hoped that Mark would be like that too when it came to crunch time. Anna smiled at Heidi.

“Don’t worry. Let me know if you’re not feeling the best, I’ve got some medication here that might ease it up a little.” Heidi nodded gratefully at her, and motioned towards the patrol.

“Thanks. Are you ready for this?”
Dylan and Liam shook each other’s hands.

“Mate, I’m so glad we’re paired up. This is going to be a killer weekend!” Said Dylan with a grin across his face. Liam smiled as well.

“Did you bring your stuff?” asked Liam. Dylan nodded.

“Of course I did. Did you get Chris in on the fun as well?”

“Of course I did! He’s like the joker at our base. I’ve got a good prank to get him back though. He practically demolished my office chair a few weeks ago, and he thinks I’ve forgotten, that I won’t get him back. He’s got it coming though!” Dylan and Liam high-fived, and headed out to the patrols with the others. They were in the same patrol as Dean and Kenz, and the trip down to the Blue Mountains was spent talking about previous Rescue experience, and what they thought was going to happen on this hike.

After an hour, they pulled into the carpark, Lachie, Kate, Chris and Kieran waiting for them, their gear already unpacked and ready to transport on the hike. Dean killed the engine, and they unloaded their gear as well. In no time at all, Jordan’s patrol pulled up, and Heidi, Anna and Daniel climbed out. Kenzie noticed that Heidi was pale and flushed, and looked unwell. She hoped Anna would keep an eye out for her, and let Vince or Mark know if she didn’t think Heidi was well enough to do this. They heard a crunch of tires on the sandy carpark, and all the teams turned around as Mark and Vince pulled up. They dusted themselves down, and pulled out their own gear, slinging it over their shoulders.

“You all ready for this?”

“Dad, do you mind if we take a bathroom break before we go?” Asked Kate. Vince nodded.

“Teams, take a bathroom break before we leave, and then we’ll head out,” he called. Everyone dropped their bags, and headed to the dingy bathrooms in the parking lot.

“We’ll wait out here,” said Liam, Dylan and Chris. They watched as the others walked into the dingy bathrooms, and then grabbed their packs. They shoved water bombs, plastic snakes, fake spiders, and powder bombs into the bags, and sealed them carefully. After a few minutes, everyone returned, and picked up their packs. The three boys smiled at each other, and picked up their own packs. Chris paired up with Kate, and they walked off. Kenzie walked silently just behind Dean, following his footsteps. It was quiet, just the sound of snapping twigs around them. Kenzie broke the silence.

“Is it true?” She asked. Dean continued onward.

“Is what true?” He asked, ducking under a branch.

“Did you die?” Dean was confused.

“Did I die when?” He asked, holding back a branch for her.

“When you rescued Jim Tucker’s wife a few years ago, you ended up trapped under the dock. Did you really die?” He nodded.

“Technically, yes. But as you can clearly see, I’m still here, so they did get me breathing again.” Kenzie stared at his back in awe, and continued to follow him. Dean stopped abruptly.

“What?” She asked. He put a finger to his lips, and then turned back, running through the bushes.
“Lachie, stop!” Dean stopped behind Lachie, and tried to pull him away from Chris. Lachie released his grip on Chris and let Dean pull him away. Vince and Mark crashed through the bushes, and looked at Chris’s bleeding nose.

“What is going on?” Asked Vince, looking around at the team. Anna pulled out her first aid kit, and passed Chris a gauze pad. He held it up to his already bruising nose.

“This... idiot here thought he could have his way with your daughter Vince. I wasn’t about to let him mess around with my girlfriend. I gave him a piece of my mind, one I hope he remembers.” Lachie glowered at Chris. Anna felt Chris’s nose.

“It’s broken. Well done,” she said to Lachie, pulling out strapping tape and fixing it onto Chris’s nose. She helped him stand, and Dean continued to hold Lachie back.

“Easy Lach. He’s not worth it,” said Dean calmly. Vince put out his hand for Kate, and hauled her up the rock. She was shaking.

“Are you alright?” He asked quietly. Mark took Chris to the side.

“What the hell were you doing?” Asked Mark, voice hushed.

“What do you expect me to do? You pair me with the hottest girl on the team, and don’t expect me to do anything? Come on Mark,” said Chris, pleading. Daniel came and stood with them.

“You don’t mess with the crew. Didn’t you ever learn that one?” Asked Daniel. Chris shrugged.

“I didn’t think she was actually dating him. Fooling around maybe? But not actually dating him.” Mark rubbed his temples, feeling a headache coming on.

“Right, you can’t go with Kate. I don’t want to have to take you back to base after this weekend in pieces.” Daniel glanced at him. Technically Kenzie should have been brought in to this, Daniel knew, but in matters involving Chris, Kenzie deferred to Daniel every time.

“Okay, Chris, you’re now going to be paired with Lachie, Kate is with Kieran. At least I know he’s not going to do anything.” Daniel nodded, and Mark left their group to talk with Vince.

“We’re going to change teams around a little. Kieran will be paired with Kate, and Chris and Lachie will be together,” said Mark. Vince winced a little.

“Are you sure you should put the two of them together? Lachie did just break Chris’s face.” Mark nodded.

“I know, but if Chris isn’t with Kate, Lachie can keep an eye on him. He’s come from an all-male station, he’d be better to be paired with Lachie.” Vince relented.

“Alright. Kate, go with Kieran. Lachie, you’re with Chris, and I want you up the front with Dean and Kenz. At least he can keep an eye on you,” muttered Vince. Dean released Lachie, who brushed himself off. He hoisted his pack higher on his shoulder, and followed Dean and Kenzie as the returned to the head of the group. Anna walked beside Heidi, who was sweating profusely. She passed her a water bottle, and Heidi drank from it greedily. She coughed, and held her ribs. They ached badly.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Asked Anna, keeping up with Heidi easily. Heidi nodded.

“I’m fine. Just need some paracetamol.” Anna pulled her pack around to the front, and pulled out a
“Take two.” Heidi nodded, and swallowed the quickly.

“Thanks.” Anna smiled at her, and pushed the box back inside her backpack.

“So when did you and Jordan get married?” Asked Anna.

“Five months.” Anna grinned at her.

“You guys are cute together.” Heidi laughed.

“Thanks Anna. Have you got any love interests in your love life?” Asked Heidi, stepping over a log. Anna blushed.

“There is! Tell me,” begged Heidi. Anna glanced behind them, and then motioned for Heidi to come closer.

“My team partner, Kieran and I get along really well. He’s cute, and caring, and we just get each other.” Heidi giggled.

“You guys would be adorable together!” Exclaimed Heidi. Anna shushed her.

“It’s our little secret, okay?” Heidi nodded.

“Sure.”

After an hour walking the entire team stopped for a quick break, and to grab a bottle of water. Dean opened his pack, and a water gun exploded in his face. He spluttered, and dropped his pack on the ground. It sprayed water for another five minutes, and died down until it just trickled water. Dean looked around at everyone, hair dripping, uniform soaked.

“Who the hell did that?” Everybody stared at Dean, and he stared back. No-one moved a muscle. Dean wiped his face clean, and pulled the remnants of the water bomb out of his pack.

“Who’s was this?” He asked. Nobody said a word. He sighed, and shoved the scraps into his bag, and pulled it over his shoulder.

“Come on,” he said huffily. Everyone trailed after him, quiet. They reached a cliff base, a towering wall ahead. Dean glanced back at Vince as Kenzie stepped forward.

“Did you really think this through?” He asked, looking back at the cliff.

“We did Deano. Welcome to joint training. Kenzie, this part’s up to you,” said Vince, handing over to her. Kenzie stood at the base of the cliff, and faced the group.

“This is where you guys are all going to learn to climb. Properly. None of this ‘I can’t do it’. You will climb, and I’ll show you how to do it right.” Dean stood back. He’d never seen anybody rival Chase in climbing before he injured his shoulder, and he was willing to bet money that Kenzie wouldn’t be able to. Heidi watched on, interested. She’d never been the greatest at climbing, and if there was a chance that she could improve, she would jump at it. Kenzie checked her straps on her pack, and sized up the cliff. It was an easy cliff. There’s been little rain, it wasn’t too sunny. Ideal conditions to climb. She glanced back, and saw Dean waiting for her to climb, arms folded, lips pursed. She gulped, nervous, and looked back at the cliff. The Special Ops members waited, breath held. They were positive she wouldn’t be able to do it, and were bracing themselves to catch
her. She started up the wall, and her heart rate slowed. She was back in the zone, and could see where her hands and feet had to go. It was going to be easy. She climbed quickly, slightly faster than walking pace, and was at the top of the cliff before anybody could blink. She straightened up, and dumped her pack on the ground. She pulled out her ropes and harness, and secured the rope carefully, and leant over the edge. Abseiling down quickly, she landed, both feet flat on the ground. Dean stared at her, gobsmacked.

“Where the hell did you learn to climb like that?” He asked, shocked. Kenzie smiled shyly.

“I’ve always been able to do this. I just have a gift when it comes to climbing. It’s not hard. You’ve just got to take five seconds to gauge what you’re doing before you climb, rather than just trying to climb.” Dean nodded. Kenz looked over the teams.

“Right… Daniel, Jordan, Dylan, Dean, Chris, Lachie and Liam. You guys up first.” They nodded, and started up the cliff.

“No. You’ve already failed. Step back down.” The boys looked at her, and stepped down, shuffling into a line.

“If you just climb, you’re going to find yourself in trouble about halfway up. You’ll run out of hand holds, or you’ll find them out of reach. Take a moment, look up, work out where you’re going to go.” The seven males craned their necks, looking skyward as they plotted their paths. After a minute, they glanced back at her.

“Give it a go. See you at the top.” The boys started climbing. Kenzie gave them all a head start. She was going to whip them good, maybe convince Chris to actually listen to her. She undid her ropes, and left her harness on. They got to the halfway point when Kenzie started up the cliff. She could do this for hours on end. She climbed to the top quickly, overtaking the boys. She was waiting at the top for them, and helped each of the boys to their feet. Chris looked at her, admiration in his eyes.

“You’re good,” he said, panting slightly as Kenzie helped him up. She grinned.

“That’s why I’m Team Leader. Not you Chris. There’s reasons behind that choice.” He nodded, and sat down. Kate looped the rope through her harness, and climbed back down. She wasn’t planning on competing with the girls. She got back down to the base.

“Kate, Heidi, Anna, Kieran, Vince and Mark.” She pointed upwards, and they took the hint. Anna had learnt well in the past two weeks with Kenzie, and was improving with every step she took. Kate had been training with Penrith Unit, and was climbing fairly regularly, and was doing well. Vince and Mark climbed at a steady pace, neither showing their age. Heidi was the one that Kenzie was concerned with. She was wheezing as she climbed, and she was looking pale. Kenzie loosened off her rope a little, and hung next to her.

“You okay Heid?” Asked Kenzie. Heidi nodded her head.

“I’ll be… I’ll be…” She took her hand off the wall to cough, and felt her leg slip. Kenzie let her rope down to grab her, and Heidi swatted her away.

“I’m fine,” she coughed. Kenzie dropped lower, watching Heidi climb. She was getting slower and slower as she ascended. Kenzie swung gently where she was.

“Come on Heidi. You need to go faster, otherwise we’ll lose too much daylight.” Heidi nodded, and tried to take another step up. Her lungs were burning, and her head spinning. Kenzie noticed
her change in demeanour.

“She called, moving upwards slowly. Heidi shook her head.

“Heidi?“ He asked. Dylan looked at him, and then at the ropes.

“Kenzie needs them.” Dean shook his head.

“She needs the red rope, not the green one.” Dylan looked at the rope, confused.

“Isn’t this the red rope?” Dean shook his head. Anna’s voice cut through their conversation.

“Kenzie caught Heidi in her arms.

“Dylan, hurry up with the ropes!” Yelled Kenzie. She looked up, and the harness and rope set were coming down, hitting the side. She grabbed it as it got closer, and wrapped the harness around Heidi. She tugged the rope, and the teams at the top pulled her up. Kenzie watched, observing, and then began her climb up the cliff. She knew Heidi wouldn’t have been well enough to do this, and if she had have been Heidi’s Unit Leader, she would have pulled her up straight away, and asked her not to attend this outing. Unfortunately though, she wasn’t. She got to the top, and the others were gathered around Heidi. Kenzie knew she didn’t need another person crowding around her, so she started packing up the ropes. Kate disengaged from the group, and came over to Kenzie.

“Is she alright?” Asked Kenzie, looping the rope carefully around her forearm.

“Anna thinks it’s just exhaustion, and because she’s already sick, her energy levels are flattened. Jordan and Daniel are going to help support her the last four kilometres. You should see Dad. He’s absolutely ropable about the fact that Heidi didn’t say anything about being sick.” Kate pulled up the harness, and folded it gently, stowing it into Kenzie’s bag.

“She shouldn’t have come,” commented Kenzie. Kate sighed.

“I know, but Heidi’s always been like this. It’s too late now to take her back, and Dad and Mark want us to keep going.” Kenzie picked up her pack, and glanced over at the group. They had lifted Heidi up, and she had an arm around both Jordan and Daniel. Anna trailed behind them, Heidi’s pack dangling off her arm.

“Come on, we better keep moving,” said Kenzie, stepping forward. Kate grabbed her own bag, and swung it over her shoulder. Kenzie trampled her way to the front of the group, and pushed past Dean.

“Hey, what’s your problem?” He asked, trying to keep up with her. She was frustrated, and turned on him, glad the others took a while to catch up with them.

“My problem is with your team.” Dean looked at her, confused.

“What’s wrong with ‘my’ team? I think they’re keeping up with your team quite fine,” shot back Dean. Kenzie shook her head.

“Oh, they’re keeping up fine. One of my members has a broken nose, and one of yours nearly got herself killed by falling off a cliff.” Dean stood in front of her, angered.

“You’re one to talk. You can’t even keep your own team in control. Your team member is responsible for his own broken nose, Lachie is not to blame for this. As for Heidi, she didn’t tell myself or Vince that she was sick, and her husband and team partner didn’t feel like they needed to tell anyone!” Kenzie gritted her teeth in frustration.

“At least I’m trying! Not everyone can live up to your expectations Gallagher!” She stormed off, leaving Dean by himself. She was so angry at what was going on with his team. He should have been keeping them in line. He was right though. She couldn’t even keep her own team in line. If she had, then Chris wouldn’t be doing the things he was doing. She heard footsteps behind her, and dried the tears she didn’t realise had fallen. Daniel appeared, pushing aside the shrub.

“Hey, what was that about?” He asked. He’d heard the heated conversation between Kenzie and Dean, and had to get Kieran to take Heidi with Jordan. Kenzie shook her head.

“It doesn’t matter. Shouldn’t you be with Jordan?” She asked.

“You’re important too. Kieran is helping Jordan, and Anna and Kate are taking turns carrying her pack.” Kenzie readjusted her bag, still not looking Daniel in the eyes. He put a hand under her chin, and lifted. She finally looked into his eyes, only seeing concern and compassion in them. She felt the tears trickle down her face again.

“I think Dean thinks that I’m not a good Unit Leader. He blames me for what happened with Chris, and the fact that Anna didn’t report to anyone that Heidi was sick. I can’t control what individuals do, neither can he.” Daniel wiped away her tears.

“Shh. Just forget it. We’re all tired, and we’re only a kilometre away from the campsite. Come on, join the group, I don’t think Mark or Vince will care if the teams are messed up.” Kenzie nodded and followed him back onto the track. The others had gone ahead, and the two of them followed the noise into the clearing.

“This is where we’re camping for the night,” announced Mark. The teams set their packs down. The boys would be splitting and sharing tents, and the four girls would share the one. Kenzie left Daniel with the other men, and headed over to Anna and Kate.

“Hey, are you okay?” Asked Anna. Kenzie nodded stiffly.

“I’m fine. Can we set up our tent?” Kate glanced at Kenzie, and nodded, pulling the tent poles out of the bag. Kenzie took the main fabric of the tent out, and Kate started threading the poles through. In minutes, they had the tent set up, and sleeping bags rolled out. Kate and Anna helped Heidi inside, letting her lie down. Daniel and Jordan disappeared to get some firewood. It would get chillier later in the bush, and they needed something to keep the warmth in the area. Kenzie heard a jingling, and turned around. Vince answered his phone and walked a little ways away from the group, talking quietly. Kenzie sat at the entrance of the girls tent, watching the sun as it set, darkness stealing over their campsite. Vince returned, and spoke quickly to Mark. Mark’s face changed from neutral to concerned almost instantly. He glanced over at Kenzie and motioned her to come over to him. Vince did the same towards Dean.


“We’ve got a rescue to attend in the morning. A medi chopper went down, and we’ve got a patient missing, as well as the two attending. Are you two okay to co-ordinate the teams in the morning?”
Kenzie and Dean looked at each other, and turned back to Vince and Mark.

“‘Yes.’”

Kenzie awoke the next morning to an all-terrain vehicle revving near her tent, and she climbed out, shielding her eyes from the early sun. Mark was talking to the rider.

“What’ going on?” She asked.

“Jonno is here to take Heidi out, and there’s a pilot bringing Liam’s chopper and Andy out to take Heidi’s place. Jonno will take the pilot out as well. Lara’s going to meet them in the carpark and take Heidi over to the hospital, get her checked over.” Kenzie nodded, and moved back inside the tent to repack her things. Heidi had coughed all night, wheezing as the night air got cooler and each of the girls had taken turns sitting up with her. Anna thought it sounded more like bronchitis, but preferred Heidi to be out and to be checked by a medical professional.

“What’s with the ATV?” Asked Anna, rubbing her eyes.

“It’s here to take Heidi out, and the pilot from the chopper that’s coming. We’ve got to get packed up and moving. We’ve got a patient out there somewhere, and a helicopter wreck to find.” Anna nodded, and shook Kate.

“Come on, wake up,” said Anna. Kate had only just climbed back into her sleeping bag, and looked at Anna with angry eyes.

“What’s the emergency?” She asked sleepily.

“We need to pack up, or we’re going to have a helicopter on top of us.” Kate got up so quick that Anna could have sworn she teleported. Kenzie laughed at the pair of them.

“We need to get Heidi and her stuff out. Anna, can you find Jordan? I don’t think he’s been told that Heidi’s leaving.” Anna nodded and left. Heidi sat up, her lungs aching.

“Tell me I don’t have to go today,” she pleaded raspily, looking at Kenzie.

“‘There’s an ATV waiting for you outside, and once the helicopter gets here, you, Jonno and the pilot will leave. Lara’s going to pick you up and take you to the hospital.’” Heidi nodded.

“Is it alright if I come in?” Asked Jordan.

“Yeah, come on,” said Kenzie, pulling back the flap. Kate left them, dragging her pack and Anna’s outside the tent. Kenzie stayed inside the tent, packing up Heidi’s gear. Jordan put a hand on Heidi’s pale face, noting how warm she was.

“Are you okay?” He asked. She shook her head, close to tears.

“Jordan, I feel like crap. I should have listened to you yesterday before we left, and stayed home,” Heidi said, upset.

“Shh. What’s been done now is done. Anna said something about you leaving?” He asked.

“The guy on the ATV is going to take her out, and then Lara will take her over to the hospital,” said Kenzie, rolling up Heidi’s sleeping bag. They heard the whipping of helicopter blades, and moved outside. Andy climbed out of the helicopter, and the pilot joined them as the blades came to a halt.
“Hey guys,” said Andy enthusiastically as she high-fived Chris and Liam, and hugged Kate. The teams smiled, and the pilot moved over to the ATV. Jordan helped Heidi up, and strapped her in.

“Stay safe,” he whispered, kissing her forehead. She nodded, and Jonno turned the ATV out onto the track, leaving the group. Dean and Kenzie glanced at each other, and Kenzie stepped forward.

“Okay, teams have been reshuffled for this rescue. You’re still in your mixed teams, they’ve just changed around.” Kenzie glanced at her list.

“Okay, Dean and I will still be together, and we’re Alpha. Daniel and Jordan, the same goes for you, team Beta, and Lachie and Chris, team Delta, you’re all still in the same teams. Dylan, you’re now paired with Kieran as team Gamma, because Liam is going up in the chopper, and we can’t have you up there. Andy, you can go up in the chopper with Liam to make team Zeta, and Kate, you’re now being set with Anna, and you’re team Omega.” The groups shifted, and Anna high fived Kate. Andy stood next to Liam.

“So, we’re going up?” She asked. He nodded.

“Yes, come on, let’s go.” She smiled, and followed him into his chopper. Liam sighed, happy to be back in his helicopter again. He loved flying, and was happy to be back up in the air. Andy waved at the teams on the ground as they rose in the air.

“So, what’s going on with Dylan and why can’t he fly?”

Dean and Kenzie walked together, mindful of the rocky incline they were moving on.

“Do you think we’ll find them?” Asked Kenzie. She didn’t know the area, and didn’t know what the environment was like.

“We usually do,” said Dean, pulling back branches.

“Hello?” Kenzie and Dean stopped.

“Hello? Who’s there?” Asked Dean.

“My names Nikki Rush. I’ve been hanging here for a while, and I don’t know how much longer I can hold on.” Dean moved closer, and realised there was an edge. He laid down, peering over the ledge. A young woman looked up at him, barely hanging on.

“How long have you been there?” Called Kenzie, pulling out her ropes.

“About an hour. I was trying to find help, and I stumbled, and fell over the edge.” Kenzie anchored her rope, and headed over the edge, down towards Nikki.

“Dean, pull out the harness and rope we used for Heidi.” She glanced up and saw him nod his affirmation. She continued on down towards the woman, moving quickly.

“Hey, how are you doing?” Asked Kenzie as she neared Nikki.

“I’m okay, just a little sore from dangling here. Do you think you can help?” Asked Nikki drily. Kenzie laughed.

“Pretty sure we can.” Kenzie straddled the woman, and looked up to where Dean should have been standing.
“Dean? You can pass down the rope now,” she called. She waited a few moments, but no rope was forthcoming. A look of concern passed her face, and she craned her neck, trying to see up the cliff.

“Dean? Dean!” Yelled Kenzie.

“I can’t hold on much longer,” complained Nikki, feeling her grip loosening. Kenzie glanced up, but still no rope was forthcoming from Dean. She loosened off her own rope, and took off her harness. She slung it around Nikki’s middle, and tightened it into a makeshift harness.

“Okay, Nikki, we have to climb down. I’ll be with you the whole time, and you’ll be fine.” Nikki nodded, nervous tension filling her entire body.

“You can release the rock now.” Nikki nodded, and uncurled her fingers, and waited to fall, when she didn’t, she opened her eyes. Kenzie had the rope coiled around her own hand.

“I’m in control; I’ll release the rope slowly so you can climb down.” Nikki nodded, and began her descent carefully. Kenzie could feel the rope burning her hands as she released it slowly. Her feet touched the ground first.

“Only a little further to go,” said Kenzie. Nikki felt her feet rest upon the ground and stopped. Kenzie undid the harness carefully, wincing as her burn rubbed against the thick rope. She dropped the harness to the ground, and grabbed her radio.

“Kenzie to Command Centre, I’ve lost contact with Dean. Advise on the situation?” Mark grabbed his radio.

“What?” Asked Mark.

“Dean’s not responding. We found the pilot hanging on the side of the cliff, and I abseiled down to get her, and I lost contact with Dean after that.” Mark held his hands to his temples.

“Kenzie, we’ve had other problems here. There are at least two armed men out there, and one of them has Kate. Vince is talking to the police force, and they’re about to start canvassing the bush. Head back here if you can with the pilot, and I’ll send Dylan and Kieran out to where Dean last was. I’ll get them to pick up your ropes and kit as well.”

“Okay, see you back at base. Kenzie out.” She motioned at Nikki, stepping forward.

“Come on, let’s go.”

Daniel and Jordan walked through the bush carefully, watching the loose rocks and fallen tree branches. It was quiet between the pair, no words passing between them. Daniel glanced up.

“Jordan, what’s that?” He asked, pointing to a cluster of trees. Something bright was wedged there.

“It’s the chopper!” Said Jordan, sprinting forward. It was missing the tail rotor, and the main propeller was bent and tangled. It had bullet holes riddled throughout the giant machine, and it creaked eerily where it was teetering. Jordan climbed in carefully.

“Daniel, we’ve got blood inside here. I’m not sure if it’s from the patient, but there’s a fair amount here.” Daniel moved away from the copter and peered over the edge.

“Jordan, there’s a body down here,” he called. Jordan jumped out of the chopper. It gave a final
groan, and fell onto the ground, crushing the body below. The fuel tank sparked, and ignited in a mushroom cloud, exploding in seemingly slow motion, burning almost merrily.

“Are you alright?” Jordan called to Daniel.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Our patient’s not though. He’s just been crushed and now he’s being burnt to a crisp.” Daniel swung his legs over the edge, and climbed down carefully. Jordan followed, taking it easily. Daniel reached the bottom first.

“I think we’re in for a body recovery.”

Andy and Liam looked over the area, trying to see anything, when they saw the puff of smoke go up.

“What the hell was that?” Asked Liam, steering away from it. Andy pulled out her map.

“I don’t know, but it’s in the grid Jordan and Daniel were searching.” She turned on her radio.

“Zeta Team to Beta Team, are you guys alright down there? We can see the smoke.” Daniel’s voice came back, crackling through the radio.

“Beta Team to Zeta, we found the chopper, and a patient. Unfortunately the chopper was on the edge of a cliff, and before we could get down to our patient, it fell. And exploded.” Andy sucked in a quick breath of air.

“Are you guys alright?” She asked.

“Yeah, we’re okay. We’ve got to tell Vince and Mark that we need the firies in here, but we can’t do anything else,” said Daniel. Andy glanced over at Liam.

“We could winch them up, and set them down with Mark and Vince, and they can go from there.” Liam nodded.

“Daniel, you and Jordan get ready. We’re going to raise you up and drop you back with Mark and Vince, and you can start a new grid.” Daniel nodded to Jordan.

“Standing by.”

Mark and Vince waited at the Command Centre for news. Vince was pacing up and down like a caged animal, struggling to stand still. The sound of the chopper above him made him look up.

“Why’s the chopper back?” Asked Vince. Mark shrugged as Jordan and Daniel winched down.

“What’s going on?” Asked Vince as the chopper pulled away.

“We found the medi-chopper,” said Daniel, brushing himself down. Mark came over.

“You found it? Where is it?” Jordan pulled out his map.

“It’s here, but it’s an exploded mess now. Our patient was underneath it when the helicopter fell, and I’m pretty sure he’s been crushed underneath. We couldn’t get in to see him.” Mark nodded.

“I’ll organise the firies.” Vince looked down at his hands.
“Any news on Kate or Dean yet?” Asked Jordan. Vince shook his head.

“Dean has gone AWOL, and Lachie’s still trying to track down the guy with the gun. If he’s done something to my daughter, he won’t know what’s hit him.” Jordan moved around behind Vince, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Lachie’s got SAS training behind him. If anyone’s going to find Kate, it’ll be him.” Vince nodded, and looked at the map.

“I’ll get you two to go over to this grid,” said Vince, pointing. A whizzing noise sounded past his ear, and he ducked down instinctively, pulling Jordan and Daniel down with him.

“We’re being shot at!”

“What is going on?” Asked Daniel. The two gunmen came closer.

“We’re looking for Nikki and John. They owe us a lot of money, so we’d thank you greatly if you could point us to them.” Daniel looked up, and pointed over to the police contingent that had surrounded her. Kenzie had come back with her earlier.

“She’s over there,” said Daniel.

“You idiot!” Hissed Vince.

“You’re not supposed to tell them,” said Jordan under his breath.

“Thanks mate,” said the first man, Mick. He pushed the table over violently, knocking it into Vince, Daniel and Jordan. Mark stood away at the side, Kenzie with him, and watched as the two men advanced towards the police officers. They pulled out their own guns, surrounding the two men, and the males admitted defeat. All three were taken into custody, moved away into squad cars. Mark and Kenzie reappeared.

“We need to find Dean,” said Kenzie, concerned for him.

“I’ll go with them; you stay here,” said Vince to Mark. He was anxious to find his team leader, make sure he was okay. Mark nodded. Daniel and Jordan stayed put, ready to help Mark man the Command Centre.

“Stay in radio contact. I’ll man the centre and recall our teams.” Vince nodded, and followed Kenzie into the bush.

“I hope he’s alright. I thought we would have heard from him by now,” said Kenzie, stepping over a fallen log.

“Thing is Kenz, if Dean thinks he’s okay, he won’t ask for help. Either that, or he’s not conscious.” Kenzie nodded.

“Hope not. Lara would kill us.”

Andy and Liam headed back to the Command Centre, Liam flying the chopper smoothly.

“So, what happens now?” She asked.

“What do you mean?” Asked Liam, manoeuvring the copter in the wind, and landing in the clearing. Mark ran over to them.
“I need you to go back!” He yelled over the whirring blades. Liam pulled off his headset.

“Why?” He shouted, leaning out slightly.

“We need you to see if you can find Dean, help Kenzie and Vince by directing them as to where he is.” Liam nodded, and waved Mark away. Mark dashed away from helicopter as Liam and Andy rose into the air again.

“Hope Dean’s okay,” commented Andy, peering out the side and front windows.

“Yeah, well, from what I’ve heard, he’s a gun at what he does. He’ll be fine.” Andy nodded.

“Zeta Team to Kenzie and Vince, how are you guys going down there?” Asked Andy.

“We’re okay. Any sightings from you?” Vince asked. Andy looked out again.

“No, not ye… Wait. Vince, head due north. There’s something down there, not moving.” Vince and Kenzie changed direction and ran through the bushes, not stopping until Kenzie threw out her arm.

“Stop!” Vince backpedalled quickly, coming to a halt.

“What?” He asked, frustrated.

“It’s a slight cliff; if you had have continued, you would have literally jumped off a cliff.” Kenzie peeked over the edge. Dean’s body was splayed awkwardly on the ground below, and Kenzie felt her heart grow with worry.

“We need to get down there. You okay with climbing down?” Asked Kenzie. Vince answered her by swinging his legs over the edge, climbing down carefully. He made it to the bottom quickly, Kenzie close to his heels.

“Oh God, Dean.” She pulled her medi-kit off her shoulders, checking Dean’s vitals.

“He’s got a pulse, but he’s not breathing.” Kenzie felt along Dean’s sternum, until she reached his trachea. It was deviated to the left, and his chest was unusually bloated.

“Vince, I think he’s got a tension pneumothorax. Can you grab the needle kit out of the bag, and then grab the oxy mask?” Vince scrambled through Kenzie’s medi kit.

“Where’s the needle set?” He asked, unfamiliar with the newer set up of the first aid packs.

“Left pocket; there should be a sterilised pouch with the needle. Hurry up, he’s turning blue!” Vince pulled out the needle, and passed it to Kenzie. She felt her way down his ribs, until she reached the third and fourth. She pressed the needle in, and heard the hiss of air as it was released from the chest cavity. The colour flooded back into Dean’s face, and he coughed as he sucked in lungfuls of air. Vince secured the oxygen mask over Dean’s face, whilst Kenzie pulled out a cervical collar, securing it neatly around Dean’s neck.

“Take it easy mate, just breathe,” said Vince reassuringly. Kenzie returned to her observations, pressing her hands along Dean’s rib cage. He winced as she put pressure down, and tried to shake his head.

“It’s alright Dean, I think they’re only cracked. Does it hurt anywhere else?” He shook his head, trying to be strong. She pulled back the other side of his shirt, and gasped.
“Dean, that’s a massive bruise.” Vince grabbed his radio, concerned over the implications of the bruise.

“Vince to Zeta Team. Andy, I need you guys to hover over us and lower a spine board. We’ve got a queried internal bleeding here, we need to get Dean out to the hospital, get him checked over.”

“Acknowledged Vince, we’ll send it down now. Are both you and Kenzie coming up as well?” Asked Andy, stepping into the back of the helicopter. She prepared the patient transport, and lowered the ropes down. Vince caught the spine board, and lowered it to the ground carefully. Kenzie and Vince worked together, transferring Dean onto the patient stretcher. He groaned as they accidently bumped his ribs.

“Sorry Dean. Hang on,” said Kenzie. She secured Dean in tightly, and pulled on the rope. They were raised quickly, and Andy helped pull Dean into the cabin. Kenzie climbed in as Andy lowered the ropes and harness for Vince.

“Dean?” Asked Kenzie. His eyes rolled into the back of his head.

“Dean! Don’t you dare do this now!” Yelled Kenzie over the sound of helicopter. Vince was pulled in, and looked at Kenzie. Andy climbed back into the front seat, and Liam leant over to her.

“What’s going on?” He shouted. She looked at him.

“Dean’s unconscious!” Liam steered the helicopter to the clearing, and set it down.

“What are you doing?” Called Andy.

“We can’t take him out to the hospital, I’ve only got enough fuel to get back to base. We’ve got to have ambo’s meet us out here,” Liam yelled back. Vince climbed out of the back, dragging Dean’s stretcher, and glanced around, looking for Mark, Daniel and Jordan.

“Where did the other’s go?” He asked, confused. Kenzie jumped down.

“I don’t kn… There!” She said, pointing through the bushes. Daniel and Chris appeared, Kate’s body between them. Vince left Kenzie to deal with Dean, and raced over to Daniel and Chris.

“Kate. Kate!” He glared at Chris and Daniel.

“I thought Lachie was taking care of this. He’s so incompetent when it comes to his job,” Vince muttered under his breath.

“You migh…” Vince cut Daniel off.

“Don’t stick up for him. What’s wrong with her?” He asked.

“Anna says she’s just unconscious, and just wants her to be checked out. It could be stress,” said Chris. Kate stirred a little.

“Lachie…” she whispered, her head falling back on her chest. Anna came crashing through the bushes.

“Vince, we need to organise medical transport, and quickly too,” she said, gasping for air.

“Why?” He asked.

“Lachie was shot, and he’s bleeding from a wound in his abdomen.” Vince paled visibly. Lachie...
had been shot trying to get his own daughter back. He dragged out his mobile, and dialled Cam.

“Jackson, I need you to organise ATV’s, helicopter assistance, everything. We need emergency medical transport out of here. I don’t care how you do it, or what strings you have to pull, just do it.” Vince closed his phone. Kenzie, Andy and Liam lowered Dean’s stretcher to the ground, and Daniel and Chris glanced over.

“Is he alright?” Asked Daniel as Kenzie crossed over to them.

“He’s got a possible spinal injury, broken ribs, queried internal bleeding, and has already had a tension pneumothorax. I think he’ll be alright, just needs some time to heal.” Andy and Liam climbed back into the helicopter.

“We’re going to head back to base. Is that okay Vince?” Vince nodded, helping Daniel and Chris set Kate down. Andy swung herself inside the helicopter, pulling the door closed. She secured her radio over her head.

“Let’s get out of here.”

Cassie met Liam and Andy at the RES helipad on the top of the building. Liam checked over the helicopter whilst Andy and Cassie headed inside.

“How’s everything going out there?” She asked as they traipsed down the stairs.

“Well, it’s been interesting to say the least. We’ve had three wounded, two gunmen on the loose, one patient crushed under an exploded helicopter, and one prankster that was taken care of.” Cassie smiled at Andy.

“Sounds like you guys had your work cut out for you. So why are you back here?” She asked, settling down in her office. Andy sat across from her.

“Well, the chopper needed more fuel, and Cam’s supposed to be organising transport. I think they’re fairly organised out there, and I’ve got stuff I need to organise.” Cassie nodded.

“You’re excused if you need to go,” said Cassie. Andy smiled gratefully at her.

“Thanks,” she said quietly, leaving Cassie’s office. She headed down the stairs, and climbed in her car, deep in thought. She knew this time would come, but secretly wished it didn’t have to. Her contract with RSO Sydney was up, and it looked like she didn’t have any employment prospects with them. This time next week she’d be on a plane back to Melbourne, back to the mundane. She rested her head on the steering wheel, the tears falling. She didn’t want to have to leave.

Vince heard the ATV’s as they roared into the clearing. Jordan and Mark still weren’t back with Lachie yet, and he was growing concerned. Dylan and Kieran came out of the bushes, and helped the medical officers load Dean onto the back of the first ATV, and then Kenzie and Anna helped hoist Kate onto the second ATV.


“I’ll go with Kate; Dylan and Kieran can go with Dean. Anna, when Lachie gets here, I want you and Chris to go with him on the ATV. As for the rest of you, pack up the gear after Lachie goes, and I’ll see you all back at RSO headquarters, and we’ll update you on the situation.” Kenzie nodded, taking in all the information. Vince climbed on the ATV with Kate, and they sped out of
the clearing, Kenzie’s form becoming smaller. Vince stroked Kate’s hair away from her face. Her eyes fluttered, and she blinked groggily.

“Hey Grommet. Welcome back,” he said softly.

“Where’s Lachie?” She asked, confused. She tried to get up, but Vince pushed her back down.

“He’s on one of the other ATV’s, he’ll be going to hospital too,” said Vince, trying to keep her calm.

“I’m fine Dad, let me sit up.” He acquiesced, helping her up. Her head was caning, her view spinning. She felt nauseous, but pushed it back down.

“What happened?” She asked shakily.

“I don’t know; Lachie came to find you, and Chris and Daniel were the ones to bring you back. I don’t know any of the details.” She put a hand on her forehead, feeling the lump on her head. As her world spun around her, she grabbed Vince’s arm.

“We need to stop moving,” she said urgently, covering her mouth. Vince caught the attention of the driver, and he pulled up to a halt. Kate climbed off the ATV unsteadily, and promptly threw up. Her head was spinning like she was on a merry-go-round, and she struggled to stand up straight. Her knee’s gave way, and Vince caught her. The driver helped Vince put Kate back up on the ATV, and her eye’s started to close.

“Don’t you dare fall asleep now Kate.” The ATV skidded to a halt in the clearing, and Vince transferred Kate into the waiting ambulance, and climbed in beside her. He wasn’t about to watch his daughter go without him. He heard the other ATV pull up, and leant out to watch as they loaded Dean into the other ambulance. He was pale, covered in a light sheen of sweat. Then the doors of the ambulance closed, slammed in Vince’s face.

Dylan and Kieran watched as the ambulances pulled away. The two ATV’s were stowed onto trailers, and the drivers sped out of the already packed carpark. The two boys headed back to their own patrol, and climbed in. Dylan was quiet, too quiet for Kieran’s liking. The silence echoed eerily through the cabin as Kieran

“What’s going on?” He asked.

“I’ll be kicked out of Rescue. I can’t work in Rescue, or in any other kind of emergency services if I’m colour blind, the rules state that I can’t!” Dylan slammed his hands on the dash of the patrol violently. Kieran pulled onto the freeway.

“Surely you can work in a call centre or something.” Dylan shook his head.

“I want to be able to do field work,” Dylan said angrily. He gripped the dash uncomfortably, so hard that his knuckles turned white. Kieran said nothing, focussing on the road. Dylan could feel the anger, the rage building up inside of him, infusing every fibre of his being.

“Pull over the car,” he said quietly. Kieran didn’t hear him, and continued down the highway, keeping pace with the other cars.

“Pull over,” Dylan said again, louder. He undid his seatbelt.

“Mate, what are you doing? We’ll be back at HQ in a few minutes.” Dylan shook his head.
“I can’t go back there. Not now. I’ll be laughed at when I return to Brisbane, the butt of jokes. No, I’m getting out now. Pull over!” Dylan said, the volume of his voice rising at the end. Kieran shook his head.

“I don’t think so,” he said. Dylan opened the door.

“What are you doing?” Asked Kieran, concern colouring his voice.

“I’m getting out of here,” he said quietly, sadness evident in his tone.

“Don’t…!” Dylan rolled out of the car, and Kieran swerved around on the road, flipping on his sirens as he skidded to a halt. He glanced up and saw Kenzie and Anna do the same thing. Dylan was hit by another car before Kenzie and Anna stopped the flow of traffic, redirecting other cars away carefully. Daniel and Jordan stopped behind Anna and Kenzie’s patrol. Daniel ran over to Kenzie, Jordan hot on his heels.

“You two go and help Kieran, we’ll direct the traffic. Kieran’s going to need a paramedic over there,” Daniel said breathlessly. Anna left, darting over to Kieran.

“What happened?” She asked. Kieran looked at her, confusion in his eyes.

“One minute he was going on about how he was upset about not being able to continue on in rescue because he’s colour blind, the next he’s undone his seatbelt, screaming at me to pull over so he can get out and escape everything. Now he’s here,” Kieran said sadly. Kenzie joined them.

“Kenz, grab a medi kit and a cervical collar for me. Kieran, I need you to hold his head still in case he wakes up. The possibility of a spinal injury is remote, but it’s better to be safe than sorry.” Kenzie disappeared into their patrol, and pulled out Anna’s much bulkier medi-kit, and brought it over to her. Anna was checking over Dylan, his body limp. She checked each leg carefully, flinching when she felt the shifting bones. Kenzie squatted down next to her, and unzipped the case.

“What do you need?” She asked.

“A splint. He’s got a least one broken leg from where the car hit him.” Kenzie nodded, pulling out the makeshift splint and the needed cloth tape. Anna shifted Dylan’s leg carefully, sliding the splint underneath, and then strapped it securely to his leg. She moved to the other leg, and winced.

“What is it?” Asked Kenzie, seeing the look on Anna’s face.

“The bones in this leg are shattered. Even if he did have a hope of ever working Rescue again, it would all be taken away. He’ll need reconstructive surgery, and it’ll take a while for this to heal.” Kieran interrupted her.

“Oh, Anna, he’s bleeding. Maybe you could get up here and put the collar on him and check this out?” She gave instructions to Kenzie to splint the leg, and grabbed the collar. She gave Kieran a quick smile, before securing the collar around Dylan’s neck. She peered around the back of his head, being careful not to move him too much.

“I think he split his head open when he hit the road. Kenz, pass me a gauze pad and a bandage,” said Anna, holding her hand out. Kenzie passed her the medical supplies, and Anna carefully bandaged up Dylan’s head. An ambulance screamed past them on the other side of the highway, and pulled a U-turn, and headed back their way. Mark and Chris finally pulled up, curious as to why they had all stopped. The ambulance crew that Jordan called earlier pulled up, the paramedics jumping out quickly. Anna updated the officers as they dragged around a gurney. They lifted him
up, attaching oxygen masks and a monitor.

“We’re close to RPA, we’ll take him there. If this is in any way related to work, we need his supervisor there.” Mark glanced around at them.

“Well, his supervisor is on the way there with his daughter. It’s a bit of a long story, and I’ll fill you in later.” The ambo’s nodded, and loaded Dylan into the back, leaving with sirens blaring. Mark looked at the remaining team.

“I’ll see you back at RES headquarters. I think Vince will be busy at the hospital. Chris, go with one of the other teams, I’m going straight to RPA to check in with Vince.” The others nodded, and Mark left, flipping on his own sirens and lights. Anna stroked Kieran’s face. He was staring blankly. Anna glance up at Kenzie.

“I’m going to go with Kieran. Is that okay?” Kenzie nodded. She guessed she’d be stuck with Chris. She stormed back to her patrol, and flung open the driver door, climbing in. She heard the passenger door open, and turned to glare at Chris, only to find Daniel smiling back at her.

“Thought I’d ride with you. That okay?”

Daniel and Kenzie unpacked the patrol together when they got to RSO. Cam directed them as to where to stow away the gear. Kenzie closed the back door of the patrol, and leant against it. Daniel leaned against the other door.

“You did well out there today,” he commented. Kenzie blushed as Chris drove into the garage.

“Thanks. You were pretty good out there today,” she said, giving him a compliment.

“I’m not the youngest ever team leader out there with her neck on the line,” said Daniel as they climbed back into their patrol to take it back to RES HQ.

“I know, and sometimes I wonder if Mark made the right decision putting me in charge. I think he should have put you down as team leader.” Daniel smiled and shook his head.

“Mark never picked you. They had a point scoring system, and scoured our resumes, giving points to various attributes. You got the highest out of anyone, even Dean and Lara’s scores were lower. You were meant for this job, and Mark’s not about to take it away from you. Grill you about it, yes, but you’re the best person for the job.” Kenzie blushed as she pulled into the parking lot at the Elite Squad base.

“Don’t be embarrassed about it,” said Daniel as the got out, making their way up the stairs.

“Be embarrassed about what?” Asked Cassie as she stepped out of her office.

“The fact that she’s the best possible person for the position of team leader. She thinks she isn’t good enough. I beg to differ,” said Daniel. Kenzie punched him in the arm, and he flinched a little.

“Geez, sorry for the compliment,” he said. He sat down at his desk, and went to pull his desk drawer, and tried to tug it open. The front of the drawer came off and he spun round stupidly on his office chair. Kenzie bent over her knees, holding her sides as she rocked with silent laughter. Cassie smiled, and tried to hide it.

“I’m going to get Chris back for that. He’s going to regret messing with my desk. Cassie heard Anna and Kieran’s patrol pull into the garage, and their doors slammed. Kenzie finally regained
control over herself, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

“The look on your face was hilarious just then Daniel,” said Kenzie, wheezing slightly. A yell sounded downstairs, and Kenzie and Cassie glanced at each other, and dashed down the stairs, nearly tripping. Anna had her hand over her locker door, about to open it. Kieran had opened his, and was covered in talcum powder, giving him a lovely ghost-like appearance. Kenzie started laughing again, and Cass tried to keep in the giggles. Anna shook her head, and started to open her own locker door.

“No!” Said Cassie, but it was too late. Anna opened her own locker door, and found herself covered in sticky slime. She wiped it out of her eyes carefully.

“I’m going to kill Chris. Hang him from the rafters, crush him with my patrol, I don’t care,” said Anna venomously. Kenzie took her hand, and Cassie took Kieran around the shoulders, and led them into the bathrooms, helping them clean up. Daniel and Liam came down the stairs and stood in the doorway to the bathroom.

“I know Chris is a pain, but I think he’s trying to establish his boundaries as a person, as a member of this team,” commented Daniel. Chris pulled up in the driveway, and got out. Daniel and Liam intercepted him before anyone else got to him.

“Mate. Pal. Buddy. Do not go that way, you’ll be mauled to death by Anna,” said Daniel, steering Chris upstairs. He pushed him down onto a chair, and sat, facing him. Liam preferred to stand, towering over them.

“Chris, I know it’s fun to play practical jokes and prank us all the time, but we don’t enjoy it. You know that, we got you back when we were out camping. You can’t keep doing it to us, or you’ll find yourself kicked out. Kenzie’s in charge, and if she doesn’t want you here, she can get in Mark’s ear and get you off the squad. Do you really want that to happen?” Asked Daniel.

“I love being here with you all, but I feel like I’m being closed in. I don’t know if I want to stay anyway. I don’t feel like part of the team. You and Kenz get along, Anna and Kieran get along, yet Liam and I don’t have the team connection. You and Andy have it though. You guys worked seamlessly out there today whilst we were getting everyone back, or finding people. I didn’t hear a word of complaint out of either of you. Yet I just don’t seem to belong here.” He got up, and shoved Daniel’s chair forcefully, knocking him to the floor, and bowling Liam over at the same time. He elbowed past them and stormed his way down the stairs, pounding each step as if it had done him wrong. Kenzie watched as he jumped into his car, and sped out of the driveway. She made her way up the stairs, and found Liam and Daniel picking themselves up off the floor.

“What happened?” She asked, helping them up.

“We tried to talk to Chris about how the practical jokes have to stop, and he just sort of lost it,” said Daniel, rubbing the back of his head. Kenzie checked the back of his head.

“You’re not bleeding, but you’ll have an impressive bruise, possibly a bump. You can’t have said just that,” commented Kenzie as she took a seat at her desk. Cassie, Anna and Kieran came up the stairs.

“What happened with Chris?” Asked Cassie, concerned. They were only a little team, and already they were having problems. Daniel glanced at Liam, and then back to Cassie.

“I think Chris is going to leave the Elite Squad.”
It was late that evening, and Liam was concerned that Chris hadn’t come back yet. He had no idea what Chris would do, or what he was capable of. He dialled Chris’s number again, and was directed straight to voicemail. He hit the desk in frustration, and Cassie stuck her head out of the office, her bag over her shoulder.

“What’s up?” She asked, locking her office door.

“Chris isn’t answering. I just want to make sure that he’s alright, he was quite angry earlier.” Cassie nodded.

“I got an update from Vince about Dylan.” Liam turned around on his office chair. Cassie’s face was serious.

“What?” Asked Liam.

“Dylan won’t be able to return to Rescue. His career is over. One of his legs was shattered in the accident, and they’re not sure if they’re going to be able to repair it, or whether they’re going to have to amputate it.” Liam sat back in his chair, running his hands through his blond hair.

“He’s going to be crushed,” he said quietly. Cassie nodded.

“He’s going to need his best mate to help him through the next couple of weeks. They won’t transfer him to Brisbane until after the surgery and a period of recovery, and even then, he’s worried about people thinking him a laughing stock. His life isn’t going to be easy anymore Liam,” said Cassie. Liam grabbed his wallet and keys off his desk and stood up.

“Chris will have to wait. I’m going to head down to the hospital, and wait to see him.”

Mark headed home after meeting Vince at the hospital. He was tired, and missed his wife and son. He opened the front door, and found Charlotte sitting on the floor with his six-year-old son Tyler, working through his homework again. Mark crouched down.

“Hey buddy,” he said excitedly, spreading his arms.

“Daddy!” Tyler exclaimed gleefully. He got up from his position on the floor, and ran over to mark, throwing his arms around him. Mark hoisted him up in the air.

“How are you doing?” He asked.

“Mummy’s been showing me my letters. But I’m not so good,” he said sadly.

“That’s okay Ty. You’ll get there one day sport.” He looked at Charlotte.

“Is he alright to go to bed?” She nodded wearily. Mark walked up the stairs, and tucked Tyler into bed.

“I missed you Daddy,” he said sleepily.

“I know Tyler, I missed you too.” Mark pulled the blankets up, and kissed Tyler on the forehead. Mark headed back down the stairs. Charlotte was packing up Tyler’s school things.

“How’s he going?” He asked, dropping to the floor to collect the last stray pencils.

“He’s getting there. It’s hard for him though, all the other kids are so far ahead. He knows it too.” Charlotte set the school books on the table, and got up on the couch. Mark joined her, and she
stretched out, head on his chest.

“How was your weekend away?” She asked.

“It’s been interesting. Watching the team dynamics, learning from Vince and his crew. It’s been a learning experience for everyone. Kenzie was definitely the right choice for team leader though. She knows exactly what has to happen, and is slowly gaining the trust and support of her team. I missed you though Charlie. And Tyler. I missed being able to come home from work to see you, and enjoy your company, and help Tyler with his letters.” He kissed the top of her head. She didn’t move.

“Charlie?” He looked around at her face, and realised she was asleep. She didn’t sleep well when he wasn’t there. He gently lifted her up, and carried her to their bedroom on the second floor, and laid her carefully on the bed, and covered her with a blanket. He checked in on Tyler, and then locked the house. He crawled into bed next to Charlotte, and embraced her carefully. She rolled over to face him.

“I missed you too.”

Daniel wrapped his arms around Kenzie, and she pushed him away gently.

“Daniel. Please, don’t,” she said quietly. She slipped out of the bed they had just slept in, and pulled her shirt over her head.

“Kenz. Kenzie, what did I do?” Asked Daniel, trying to follow her into his bathroom. Kenzie came back out, her hair pinned back up in a business like ponytail. Her make-up was smudged.

“I’m only nineteen Daniel. I have no idea what I’m doing, I don’t even know if this is right. I want to go back to being friends, but I just don’t know if we can. I shouldn’t have done this, I wasn’t ready.” The tears fell steadily down her face, and she hurriedly wiped them away. Daniel took her by the tops of her shoulders, and turned her to face him.

“I’m sorry Kenzie. You’re so mature and level-headed that I forgot how young you really are. It was my fault for pushing you into this. I was the one who took things too fast.” He kissed the top of her forehead.

“Do you want me to take you home?”

Anna sat in her apartment, favourite pyjamas on, and her favourite DVD playing in the background. She’d enjoyed her time away, but was a creature of comfort, and enjoyed her time in her own apartment. She smiled as she thought about Kieran and the powder bomb that Chris had left him. It was funny, and she had laughed, afterwards though. In the beginning she had wanted to kill him, string him from the ceiling. Although, on second thoughts, he did bring a sense of humour to the station. A knock resounded on her door, and she set down her bowl of ice-cream on the coffee table, and pulled her dressing gown closer to her body. She turned off the DVD, and tossed the remote on the couch.

“Coming!” She called, running down the hall. She didn’t check out of the peephole, and gasped as she realised her worst nightmare was standing in front of her.

“Dad?”
Episode 4: Ugly Truth

Episode 1.4 – Ugly Truth.

Anna backed away from her father, nightmarish images coming to her mind. Her father had been the one responsible for her mother’s untimely death, the one responsible for the shootings in Alice Springs, the one who used to abuse her, tell her she was ugly. The one who made her choose paramedical care as her career because she wanted to know how to treat herself. He was the one who came to her in her nightmares, threatening to kill her. She wished that Kieran was there to help her, save her from him. Her father entered the room, closing the door with a soft click.

“Anna. My precious Anna. I’ve had nothing to do since you left Darwin, and it’s been lonely. One of your little friends told me where you moved though, and I came to find you. See? I did! I'm not going to leave you Anna, not ever again. I’m going to visit you every day, come and see you. Don’t tell anyone I’m here though, or they won’t be able to see you anymore,” he said, pointing a finger in her direction. She stopped against a wall, fumbling for something to knock him out with. She came up with nothing, and felt her father’s fist connect with her face. At first she felt nothing, and then felt the searing pain. She was relatively sure the force had cracked her cheek-bone, but wasn’t sure. Another punch to the face, his dirty, cracked fingernails catching on her skin. She winced at the pain as they tore the flesh open, the blood trickling slowly.

“I’ll be back tomorrow, daughter dearest,” he said ominously, backing away. Jim Hunt left the apartment, slamming the door behind him. Anna slumped down the wall, and let the tears fall…

The next morning, she woke up, her pillow stained reddish brown from her face. She stumbled to her bathroom, and inspected the bruising on her face. Purple and blue splotches covered the right side of her face, and her cheek was tender and swollen. She could barely open her right eye. It was just like her father to make sure the damage was visible. She’d have to come up with another lie, another tale to tell. She sighed as she pulled on her uniform, wincing as the coarse fabric rubbed against her cheek. She cursed her father under her breath, and tried to think up a good story as she walked downstairs to the parking garage. She gasped as she saw her patrol, covered in key marks. The paintwork was ruined. She swung open the door, and climbed in, wanting to cry, but not having the energy. She pulled up to RES headquarters twenty minutes later, about the same time Kieran and Daniel pulled in. They lived in the same apartment building, so they left one patrol at work, and car-pooled with the other. Daniel whistled as he saw Anna’s face.

“What did you do?” He asked, coming over to inspect it. She pushed him away, anger on her face. Daniel backed away, hands raised.

“Sorry. Sorry!” He dashed away up the stairs into the offices. Kieran approached her slower, and cradled her chin in his hand.

“Anna. Did someone do this to you?” He asked. She hesitated, and shook her head.

“I tripped and fell, and my door handle caught my face.” She winced as his hand brushed against her cheek.

“As long as you’re sure,” he said, still not convinced. Someone had her scared, and she wasn’t going to tell anytime soon. He followed her up the stairs, and Mark opened his mouth to ask Anna what had happened. Kieran caught his eye, and shook his head. She sat at her desk, shaking a little
as she started her work log for the week. They were still a probationary group, and they needed to document everything before they could be considered an organisation like Special Ops. Cassie stuck her head out of her office, and motioned for Kieran to come inside. He sat down, knowing full well what was coming.

“Kieran. What happened to Anna?” She asked bluntly, getting straight to the point.

“Cass, if I knew, I would tell you. I don’t know though. She tells me she tripped and fell, and hit her face on her door handle, but she was hesitant before she answered. I don’t know Cassie,” said Kieran, trying to think if she’d mentioned anything else. Mark poked his head inside the office.

“Cass, I need Kieran. We’ve got a rescue to attend,” he said quickly. Kieran got up out of his chair, and followed Mark down the stairs to the garage. He went to climb into Anna’s patrol, and stopped.

“Anna, who did this to your patrol?” He asked, incredulous.

“I accidentally hit another car. Just leave it, I’ll pay for it and get it fixed,” answered Anna, frustrated. Kieran climbed into the driver side, flipping on the engine. Anna climbed into the passenger side, and looked away out the window.

“So what’s the accident we’re attending?” He asked, reversing out of the carpark, and then turning out into the street. Anna gasped as she saw her father standing by the driveway, waving as she left. She turned back quickly, and scrambled to get her thoughts back in order.

“Capsized boat on a dock; severed leg, concussion and missing child,” she said, almost on the verge of hyperventilation. Kieran rested a hand on her leg, and she flinched, nervous.

“Hey. Things will be okay, we’ll get to them in plenty of time,” said Kieran, misinterpreting her actions. She tried to smile, but failed miserably.

“Yeah… I suppose…” The teams sped towards the boat dock, and screamed to a halt. Kenzie climbed out, assessing the situation. Chris had finally returned back to work this week, and Liam was keeping an eye out for him.

“Right, Anna, Kieran, I want you looking after the main patient. Daniel and I are in the water, looking for the little boy, and Chris and Liam; we need you to find the leg.” The teams split up, Kenzie and Daniel pulling on their wetsuits, and diving in the water. Chris and Liam began the arduous task of finding their patients leg. Anna pulled out her hefty medical kit, and with Kieran close behind her, headed down to the dock. Anna felt nervous, like eyes were watching her every move. She glanced up. The rest of the team was occupied with their duties, so it wasn’t any of them. She looked up where the patrols were, and saw the leering face of her father. She quickly looked down at her patient, and wrapped a tourniquet around the injury. Kieran handed the patient a green whistle, and Anna prepared a syringe of morphine. Her hands were shaking violently at the thought of her father being near her, but she knew he wouldn’t do anything while there were people around.

“Anna,” she heard Kieran saying, and she shook her head to bring herself back to her patient. She pushed the syringe into his thigh, and Kieran set up an IV drip of saline. Anna pulled out an oxygen mask out, and secured over the man’s face. He pulled it off.

“Where is he?” He asked, raspy. Anna glanced at Kieran.

“Where’s who?” She asked.
“My son. He was in the boat when the creep flipped it over and pushed it off. The edge of it caught my leg,” he said, coughing. The ambulance pulled up just as Chris and Liam brought over the leg. They passed it over to the paramedics, and then helped Kieran and Anna load their patient into the ambulance.

“We’ll find your son sir,” said Anna as the doors closed. Kenzie and Daniel pulled up a tiny limp body.

“Anna!” Yelled Kenzie, dragging the body onto the dock. Anna and Kieran sprinted down to the dock, lifting the boy up.

“Liam, Chris, I need towels.” They dashed up to the patrol, grabbing the fluffy towels, and ran back down to the dock. Kieran and Daniel had started CPR on the child, pumping his chest rapidly. Anna had him bagged, and Kenzie grabbed one of the towels off the boys. Anna continued pushing air into his lungs while Kenzie towelled him off.

“Okay, attach the defibrillator,” said Anna, once he was relatively dry. Kieran attached the pads to the boy’s chest.

“Clear!” The boy’s chest jumped, but he was still flat-lined. Daniel resumed compressions while they waited for the defibrillator to recharge. After twenty seconds, Kieran gave the call.

“Clear!” He didn’t even jump this time, laying on the deck. He had no pulse, still wasn’t breathing, and was turning a pale shade of blue. Anna stopped, leaning back on her heels. Kieran and the others ceased their actions, one by one.

“We’ve got to call it,” she said quietly. Chris led an ambulance officer down, and he handed the paperwork to Kenzie. She signed it, passed it back, and headed up to the patrol to get changed. Chris and Liam packed up the gear, returning to their own patrol. Daniel quietly padded after Kenzie, taking his time. Anna sat on the dock, shocked, unable to move. Kieran sat with her, not speaking, watching the water as it lapped the edges of the wooden dock.

“I can’t believe it,” said Anna, almost in a whisper. Kieran put an arm around her.

“Life happens Anna. It’s okay,” said Kieran softly. She nodded, and stood up.

“Listen, can you head back with Kenzie and Daniel? I’m going to take the patrol over for a quote on the new paint job.” Kieran nodded, and kissed her forehead.

“Stay safe, and I’ll see you back at base.” She nodded, and slowly made her way up to her patrol. She glanced around nervously, looking for her father, but he was nowhere to be seen. She exhaled in relief, and climbed in the driver side. She sat, listening to the radio for a few moments, trying to relax. The news came on.

“And the national search for James Hunt continues after he escaped from police custody in Darwin. He is the main suspect for several shootings, murders and a rape case in both Northern Territory and Queensland. Police suspect he may have returned to Sydney to find his daughter…” Anna switched off the radio. She didn’t need to hear any more about her rampant father and his ways. She pulled out of dirt carpark, heading for the main road. In her head, she was mentally tallying up her savings, working out how she could possibly afford to pay for the paint job on her patrol. Head office would never approve a subsidy for it, and she had no hopes of asking her father for help. He had no money, nothing to his name but the bad reputation he had been accumulating for years. Anna was frustrated with him, beyond all measures. He’d taken away her childhood, her mother, her brother. She was the only one still alive because she fought him every time he abused
her. Anna came up to the intersection, and saw the red light. She pressed the brakes in, but nothing happened. She swore at herself as she careened through the intersection, cars honking their horns at her, furious that she drove through the red light. Anna fumbled for the handbrake as she came up to another set of lights, and pulled it up in an attempt to halt the out of control vehicle. She swerved around, wheels skidding, handbrake squealing, and she finally came to a stop in the middle of the intersection. All she heard before the lights went out was the honking of a car horn, then nothing…

“Guys, we have a callout!” Yelled Mark. The team scrambled up the stairs.

“What’s the situation?” Asked Kieran, nervous energy running through him.

“One of ours – Anna’s patrol has been in an accident, the local police station has reported it in. The rest of you need to head over to the same police station, get your reports into the officers there.” They nodded, climbing in the patrols. Kieran climbed in with Kenzie and Daniel.

“What do you think happened?” Asked Daniel.

“Anna’s such a safe driver, it wouldn’t be like her to just have an accident,” said Kenzie, changing lanes.

“I know,” said Kieran, watching out the window. Daniel turned up the news on the radio.

“The national search for James Hunt continues after he escaped from police custody in Darwin. He is the main suspect for several shootings, murders and a rape case in both Northern Territory and Queensland. Police suspect he may have returned to Sydney to find his daughter…” Daniel flicked it off again. It had been the main story repeated all day.

“Poor girl. Whoever she is, I hope he never finds her. Man sounds like a creep,” said Kieran. Chris and Liam peeled away from them, pulling into the police station. Kenzie slammed on the brakes as they reached the police roadblock. Anna’s smashed patrol was just up ahead. The other car had been pulled back by a passing tow truck.

“Oh my god, how hard did they hit her?” Asked Kieran, grabbing his medi-pack.

“I have no idea, but I think she might be luck that it hit the passenger side, not the driver side,” commented Kenzie. Daniel pulled out a spine board, and passed a cervical collar to Kieran. The three of them sprinted over to Anna’s patrol. Her head was resting on the window glass, blood trickling down the pane. Kieran tried to pull her door open, but the framework of the patrol resisted his attempts, making his efforts futile. The driver of the other car was babbling to Daniel about how Anna had just stopped in the middle of the intersection, and it wasn’t his fault. Kenzie and Kieran ignored the man, more focussed on getting to Anna. Kenzie skillfully climbed on the roof.

“I’ll go in through the sunroof,” said Kenz. The safety glass cracked, and she peeled it away in a sheet, careful of spilling any shards. She passed the glass down to Kieran, who set it aside carefully, returning his focus to the job at hand. Anna was stirring in the front seat, but wasn’t moving a lot. Kenzie slid in beside Anna, and pushed open the rear driver side door.

“Anna, honey, we need to put a collar on you. You’ve got a bit of a head wound, and we’re not sure if you’ve done any damage. Stay still,” commanded Kenzie as Kieran wrapped the collar around Anna’s neck.

“Can you tell me what happened?” Asked Kenzie, trying to get Anna focussed.

“I left the earlier accident, and was heading over to the mechanics, find out where they wanted me
to go to get the paint job redone. I came up to a red light and the brakes didn’t work. I jammed them as hard as I could, but I couldn’t stop. I came up to this intersection, and pulled the handbrake. I swerved and stopped, and I didn’t realise that I was right in the middle of another set of traffic lights. I blacked out when the other car hit me.” Anna stopped.

“Is the other driver okay?” She asked softly. Kenzie nodded.

“He’s busy chewing Daniel’s ear off about how you just stopped in the intersection, and ranting about how you’re going to pay for his damage, and he’s going to sue us.” Anna looked stricken.

“Honey, don’t worry. Things like this happen all the time to the RSO squad. You should ask Lara how many times their insurance has had to pay for things, or better yet, Head office.” Anna laughed a little. Her head was pounding, and Kenzie pressed a gauze pad to the wound.

“You might need a stitch or two to keep that closed, but other than that, I think you’ll be quite fine,” said Kenzie. Anna gave her a weak smile.

“So how are you going to get me out?” She asked. Kenzie and Kieran looked at each other, just as Mark pulled up. He threw open the back doors on his patrol, and pulled out the combi-tool.

“You guys might need this,” he called. Kenzie smiled gratefully at him.

“Thanks Mark.” He smiled, and wedged the tool into the knuckled framework. The door groaned as he pushed it open, finally popping it out of place. Anna breathed a sigh of relief, and Kieran climbed out of the back. The ambulance officers met them at Anna’s car, and transferred her onto their own spinal board. Anna knew they were just being cautious, but she felt ridiculous being strapped to a piece of plastic board. They wheeled her into the back of the ambulance, and Kieran looked at Mark.

“Go,” Mark said, waving his hand. Kieran followed Anna into the back of the ambulance, and Mark started packing up the gear. Kenzie put away her medical supplies, noting that her supply of gauze pads was getting low.

“Mark, Anna said her brakes weren’t working. Didn’t you get the patrols serviced last week?” Kenzie asked, a little confused. Mark nodded.

“I did. Pop the hood for me,” he said, thinking. Kenzie did that, and joined him around the front of the vehicle. Mark carefully traced the brake lines down, following their course through the engine work when they suddenly disappeared. He glanced at Kenzie.

“You see that?” He asked. She shook her head. He pointed down to where the brake fluid was pooling, and Kenzie sucked in a quick breath. She knew exactly what that was, and it wasn’t good. Mark nodded to her.

“This was no accident. Anna’s brakes were cut.”

Kieran fussed over Anna while she was in the hospital, until she finally pushed him away.

“Kieran, please. I’m fine. Can you ring Mark and let him know I’m okay?” She asked. Kieran nodded, and left the curtained cubicle. Anna felt the tears fall, knowing she was hiding everything from Kieran. A doctor returned to her.

“Miss Hunt, you don’t have any serious injuries, but you do have some bruising that is inconsistent with the car crash.” He checked over her face, noting the marking. He couldn’t say anything unless
she requested him to, and he had the feeling that she wouldn’t. He’d requested an x-ray of her face, and it confirmed his suspicions.

“Miss Hunt, your films here show me that you have a cracked zygomatic bone. There’s nothing we can do other than ice it and give you painkillers, but it’s an old injury. Is there something going on?” He asked politely. Anna felt her hackles rise.

“There’s nothing wrong, I can deal with this myself,” she said defensively. She grabbed her jacket off the bed next to her, and hopped down.

“Am I free to go?” The doctor handed her a form to sign, and then she left. She checked the hallway for Kieran, and he was on the phone, in what appeared to be a heated discussion. She snuck out the back entrance, and hailed a cab. She wasn’t staying any longer than she needed to. The ride back to her apartment was quiet, the cab driver glancing back nervously at her. She tipped him as she got out, and he sped away. Anna climbed the stairs, dreading heading back to her apartment. Her father had promised to find her, promised to come and see her, and if she wasn’t there, or had told someone about him, that his visits wouldn’t be as pleasant as it was last night. She opened the door to her apartment, noting that the alarm was off. She sighed. Tonight was going to be a bag of fun. James came out of the bathroom, securing his belt.

“Anna darling, come show me your face,” he said sweetly. Anna hesitated for a second, thinking about resisting, but her feet carried her forward to his outstretched arm. He turned her face sideways, admiring his handiwork. Anna felt the bile rise in her throat. She secretly wished he’d leave, leave her alone. She didn’t expect the stinging slap across her face.

“You told,” he said, sneering into her face.

“No, no I didn’t tell anyone! I swear, I told them I had a fall,” Anna said, pleading. He kneed her in the stomach, bringing her to her knees.

“I don’t believe you. Anna, you’ve got to learn, I’m in control here, not you.” He kicked her again, and Anna felt her ribs creak under the force.

“Dad, please, I didn’t tell anyone,” said Anna, tears streaming down her cheeks.

“You know why I don’t believe you? My name’s all over the radio, my face is on the news, they’re circling news of my escape everywhere. I blame you,” he said viciously, spitting on the floor in front of her. He pulled her hair back, wrenching her neck.

“I’m growing tired of this game Anna. It’s been going too long,” he said, leering at her. Ann gulped, nervous.

“What are you going to do?” She asked, fear filling her entire being. He smiled, a touch of maniacal in his voice.

“You’ll see…”

“Kieran, the brakes were cut on her patrol,” said Mark. Kieran was standing in the hospital, not able to believe his ears.


“We don’t know Kieran, but you can’t leave her alone. Stay with her, go back to her place with her. The police and forensics are looking over the patrol now, trying to see what evidence they can
“Until we find.” Kieran was quiet.

“Alright, I’ll stay with her. Listen, Mark, I think that someone else has been messing with her. She didn’t get that black eye just by falling over,” said Kieran.

“I know, but she’s got to come to us and ask for help Kieran. We can’t intervene unless she asks for it. I’m sorry, I wish I could help.” Kieran knew that, but didn’t want to admit it.

“Alright, thanks Mark. I’ll keep you updated.” Kieran closed his phone, and leant back against the wall. Life seemed so complicated at the moment. He opened his eyes, and walked around the corner, and then stopped. The bed where Anna had been sitting was now empty, the sheets crumpled a little. He stopped a passing nurse.

“Excuse me, my friend Anna Hunt was here a few minutes ago. Can you tell me where she was transferred?” He asked. The nurse walked over the desks, and grabbed a clipboard, shuffling through the papers.

“Anna Hunt was discharged fifteen minutes ago, after she refused overnight supervision.” Kieran nodded his thanks, and she left, returning to his duties. Kieran walked outside of the hospital, wondering if she’d just gone for a walk. The nearby park was near empty, Anna nowhere to be found. He pulled out his phone, and dialled Mark.

“Rescue Elite Squad, Mark Ramirez speaking.”

“Mark, it’s Kieran. Anna slipped out while I was on the phone to you.” Mark sucked in a deep breath, and exhaled quickly.

“Okay. I’m sending Kenzie and Daniel over to her place now, and I’ll get Chris to swing by and pick you up. Liam’s out on a run for Westmead Children’s hospital, so he’s not around,” said Mark, waving the teams out the door, handing them details. Kenzie was blushing; she’d been eavesdropping on his conversation.

“Kieran, Kenzie and Daniel are on the way over to Anna’s, and Chris is travelling to you now. I want you to head back here when Chris has you…”

“No. Mark, I have to go to Anna’s, make sure she’s okay.” Mark hesitated, and then agreed.

“Okay. Take Chris with you though, and then send him back. It’s late, and we need to close up headquarters.”

“Thanks Mark.” Kieran hung up, and hoped with all his heart that Anna was okay, and the horrible gut feeling he had was wrong.

“Maybe she went home to just relax. I mean, it’s not everyday someone cuts your brakes, and you end up in a car accident. She probably needed time to unwind, de-stress.” Daniel shook his head, taking the corner sharply.

“I think there’s more going on. I know I’ve only known Anna a little while, but she’s only ever been nice to me. This morning though, she nearly chewed my face off. I’ve never seen her so angry before. She’s protecting somebody, hiding something,” commented Daniel, pulling up in front of Anna’s apartment complex. Kenzie climbed out, and looked up at the tall building.

“Anna lives on the seventeenth floor. She must have a lot of money,” said Kenzie, slightly envious.
Or she’s got no-one else to spend it on,” said Daniel, pushing the call button for the lift. It came down smoothly, a quiet ding alerting them to its presence. Kenzie and Daniel stepped in, the music playing hauntingly. Daniel jabbed the button for the seventeenth floor, and the doors slid closed neatly, and they went up through the levels. Kenzie stared at the floor, not knowing where to look. The doors opened, and Kenzie looked up.

“Her door's open,” she said, sprinting down the corridor. Anna’s door hung lopsidedly, blood smeared on the frame. Daniel caught up to her, pulling her back.

“Let me go first. Ring Mark, tell him to get the police here,” said Daniel in a low, urgent voice. Kenzie pulled out her phone, and Daniel crept inside.

“You stupid girl, telling the world what was going on. I told you not to say anything!” Screamed a voice from the bedroom. A choking noise was heard from behind the door, and Daniel felt his stomach drop. He kicked the door open, and saw James Hunt standing over Anna, hands around her throat. Anna was pale, almost a light blue shade.

“Get your hands off her!” Yelled Daniel, shouldering into James. A struggle ensued between James and Daniel, each fighting for the upper hand. Daniel got in a few good punches before James smashed into him, a flurry of punches sending him reeling into the metal bedframe, knocking him unconscious. He fell to the floor with a sickening thump, rolling to the side.

“Such a fragile one. At least Anna can put up with what’s served to her,” spat James. Anna hadn’t moved from the bed, but was still breathing, and James moved to finish her off.

“No!” Screamed Kenzie, standing in the doorway. James turned to face her, evil grin plastered across his face.

“Another one. My pleasure,” said James, almost to himself. Kenzie turned heel and ran, grabbing her radio as she ran, James hot on her heels.

“Rescue One to Rescue Base, Mark, where the hell are Chris and Kieran?” She asked breathlessly. She ran down the flight of stairs, hearing the heavy breathing behind her, and hoping she wouldn’t be his next victim.

“Rescue Base to Rescue One, Kenzie, they’re on their way. Why? What’s the rush?” He asked.

“James Hunt is chasing me,” she said, slamming a door in his face. She heard a groan from behind the door, and then a roar of anger.

“The James Hunt?” Kenzie was getting frustrated.

“Yes Mark, the James Hunt. He’s Anna’s father, and he’s trying to kill me,” she said, hiding around a corner.

“Police are on their way, Chris and Kieran give their ETA as five minutes. Are you okay?” Kenzie didn’t answer, on account of James holding her up against the wall.

“You told bitch!” He said angrily, pushing her against the wall. He threw her back against the bricks, and she cracked her head. He started to walk away, thinking he was done, until Kenzie grabbed his leg.

“I’m not letting you go up there to hurt her more,” said Kenzie raspily. Her head hurt like hell, and she was beyond nauseous, but she wasn’t going to let him go. He wrapped his hands around her neck, and Kenzie could feel her trachea being squashed. She flailed, and felt her foot catch her
target, and James dropped her almost instantly. She heard sirens, and got up, waiting for James to try again.

“Police!”

“Up here!” Yelled Kenzie. The police trampled up the stairs to where Kenzie and James were waiting. The police made James stand up roughly, and took him down the stairs. Kieran and Chris met them at the bottom, Kenzie walking a little shakily.

“Where’s Anna?” Asked Kieran, urgency colouring his voice.

“She’s upstairs,” said Kenzie, feeling the wound on the back of her head, her hand coming back wet with blood. Chris pulled out a gauze pad, and handed it to her.

“Do you want to…” Kenzie shook her head, seeing stars for a moment.

“No, Anna and Daniel are hurt. We need to get up to them,” said Kenzie. Her own pain could wait. Anna and Daniel were more important at the moment. Kieran sprinted up the stairs, not willing to wait for a lift. Chris glanced at Kenzie, and she nodded. She needed him up there with Kieran. She didn’t have a chance to check on Anna, she was more concerned about what James was doing. She knew it was a stupid idea to scream at James, but felt like she didn’t have any other option.

“Rescue Base to Rescue One, Kenzie, sit rep.”

“The cops picked up James about five, ten minutes ago. I was right, it was the guy that they’ve been tracking from Darwin.” Kenzie still couldn’t believe it.

“How’s Anna?”

“I have no idea, I’m on my way up there now.” Kenzie was almost at the seventeenth floor.

“Okay, keep me posted. Rescue Base out.” Kenzie secured her radio back to her jacket, and half-ran into Anna’s apartment.

“Guys, what’s going on?” She asked. Kieran got up.

“Anna’s unconscious, but should wake up soon, Daniel needs help though. We need to stem the bleeding. Can you stay with Anna?” Kenzie nodded, taking Kieran’s place on the bed.

“Oh God, Daniel, please don’t die.”

Anna’s eyes shifted, and the first face she saw was Kenzie’s above her. She was startled, and tried to sit up.

“Shh. Relax, you’re okay,” said Kenzie, laying a reassuring arm on her. Anna looked around for her father, waiting for the retribution that was surely due, but he wasn’t there. She glanced up at Kenzie, concerned.

“Where is he?” She asked, wincing as her stomach twinged in pain. She ached all over, and didn’t even want to know what had happened.

“The police came to pick him up about twenty minutes ago. He tried to kill you Anna, why didn’t you tell us what was going on?” Anna lifted herself up, and felt the tears bubble over.

“Oh, Anna,” said Kenzie, wrapping her arms around her. Anna cried into Kenzie’s shoulders, and
Kenzie just rubbed her back, just holding her. She’d been bottling all her emotions up, trying to stay strong, but this moment had been years in the coming. Finally, a point in her life where her father no longer ruled her every move, trying to make life difficult. Kenzie heard footsteps, and Anna’s body tensed up, nervous. Mark and Cassie walked into the room. They’d been in the process of locking up, and both had come to check on Anna.

“We’ve got him back!” Called Chris. Daniel was semi-conscious, blood still dripping from his mouth and head wound, but the flow was easing. Cassie knelt down next to Daniel, and glanced at Kieran.

“I think you should be with your girlfriend,” said Cassie quietly, taking over Daniel’s treatment. Kieran sat back on his heels.


“I’m not stupid, you know. You two have come in together the last couple of weeks, and every time you look at her, you can see it in your eyes.” Kieran felt his face flush. Cassie jerked her head towards where Anna and Kenzie were sitting.

“Go. Between Mark, Kenz, Chris and myself, we can get Daniel out.” Kieran stood up, brushing himself down. Kenzie extracted herself from Anna’s grip, and Kieran wrapped Anna up in his embrace. She felt his warmth, and for the first time in her life, actually felt safe. He kissed her forehead.

“I will always be here for you, no matter what. You know that. Why didn’t you tell me what was going on?” He asked gently.

“Would you like to admit that your father is a murderer? He’s the one that killed my mother and my sister, killed people I didn’t even know in Darwin. I’ve spent my whole life trying to forget the man I call father, trying to get away. He’s the reason I joined the paramedical and ambulance services in the Northern Territory. I was sick of being injured all the time, and not knowing how to treat myself. Did you know, before I started my course, I was having to travel to a bunch of different medical centres, because I was scared that if I was recognised as an abuse victim that they’d take me away, label me as broken and put me into a foster home. I couldn’t have that, so I never told anyone, and then started patching myself up after every time he hit me. I have had more broken bones, bruises and lacerations than I can count. I’ve had to deal with this for so long by myself, and I didn’t want you to be burdened by that too. Today’s not the first day he’s tried to kill me,” she added, leaning against his chest. He smoothed her hair down.

“He’ll be put into jail now. You won’t have to worry anymore. Listen, I don’t ever want you to be alone again, or to hide anything like this from me. I care for you too much to see that happen,” he said quietly. Anna looked up at him.

“Where have you been all my life?”

Cass, Mark, Kenz and Chris transported Daniel outside to the waiting ambulance, and Kenzie volunteered to travel with him. She climbed in the back, taking his hand. He had a suspected concussion, mild internal bleeding and a cracked rib or two, not to mention the black eye that was blossoming beautifully on his right eye. He gripped her hand tightly, and pulled the oxygen mask down so she could hear him.

“Promise me you don’t have any secrets like that,” he said softly. Kenzie shook her head.
“Nothing like that. At least, no secrets that are going to kill me, or risk everyone else’s life. Cross my heart and hope to die,” she said, laughing. Daniel laughed a little as well, and winced as his ribs complained. The attendant in with them pushed a dose of morphine into the drip that was in Daniel’s arm. Kenzie looked at him.

“I’m so sorry about the other day. I didn’t mean to just… just leave like that.” She looked down at her lap, not wanting to look him in the eyes. He pulled her hand close and kissed the back of it.

“Don’t worry about it. Take things at your own pace, don’t try and change because of me, or any other guy. Don’t even think about it. Be yourself,” he said to her. Kenzie smiled at him, unable to contain herself.

“Don’t you ever change De Luca, I don’t know what I’d do.”
Episode 5: Control

Episode 1.5 – Control

Kenzie sat in her loungeroom, enjoying breakfast before she’d have to leave for work again. Her phone buzzed on the coffee table and she checked it.

Just a message from your Mum to say I love you, hope you’re enjoying Sydney! Love Mum and Dad. Kenzie smiled at the message. She’d hardly had time to even call them, tell them how she was going. She’d call them later, catch up with them. She heard a knock on her front door, and she put down her bowl of cereal, and looked through the peep-hole.

“De Luca? What are you doing here?” Asked Kenzie. She was glad she’d put on half-decent pyjama’s when she went to bed last night.

“You asked for a lift Worthington. Thought I’d show up on time for a change.” Kenzie felt flustered.

“Right. Um… Wait there. I’ll be out in five minutes.” She slammed the door on Daniel’s laughing face, and ran to her bedroom. She pulled on her uniform quickly, and pulled her hair back into a neat bun. She grabbed her backpack, and then swung the front door open.

“Let’s go,” she said, face flushed. She locked the door behind herself, and followed Daniel down the stairs out into the weak morning sunshine.

“You forgot, didn’t you.” He stated. She nodded slightly.

“It’s okay. I’ve done that before too. I probably should have called beforehand,” said Daniel, pulling out into the traffic. Kenzie pulled out her phone, and typed a quick reply to her mother.

“Everything okay?” asked Daniel, glancing sideways at her.

“Yeah, just my Mum checking in. I’m an only child, and she’s always been super protective of me. All of a sudden, I uprooted and moved to Sydney. I’m surprised she hasn’t been hassling people with phone-calls, or emailing every five minutes to make sure I’m okay.” Daniel chuckled.

“Yeah, my parents were like that with my little brother.” He pulled up into base. Kenzie climbed out.

“Thanks for the ride De Luca,” said Kenzie. She headed inside the main garage, and stopped. Just around the corner was Anna and Kieran, heads bent together. Kenzie stifled a giggle, and dashed past them into the back locker room. She made it inside and burst out laughing. She didn’t know why she was laughing. Daniel followed her inside.

“What’s so funny?” He asked, smiling.

“I have no idea, but they’re so cute together!! I wish they’d hurry up and get married or something,” she said, wheezing slightly as she caught her breath. Daniel shook his head, stuffing his bag in his locker.

“Oh, by the way, Mark and Cass are looking for you.” Kenzie nodded, and headed upstairs to the offices. She tapped on Cassie’s door, and opened it slightly.
“You wanted to see me?” She said, hesitant.

“Yes. Come in.” Cassie’s face was serious, and Kenzie’s heart skipped a beat as she stepped inside. Mark was inside, and his face mirrored Cassie’s.

“Take a seat Kenzie,” said Mark, indicating the empty seat between himself and Cassandra. Kenzie sat down, her mouth dry.

“What’s going on?” She asked. Mark scattered sheets of paper over the desk.

“These are your team’s reports. You’re supposed to check them before they’re submitted to me, and then filed. Have you been doing that?” Asked Mark. Kenzie nodded vigorously.

“I’ve been staying back late so I can get it done on time for you,” she answered.

“Well then, why do none of the reports match up?” Asked Mark. Kenzie was speechless. Mark glanced at Cassie.

“I… I don’t understand. The reports I checked all matched up, were correct. I don’t understand how they could have been changed,” said Kenzie.

“You need to get it under control Kenzie. This doesn’t look good when Head Office reads your reports and finds out they’re all conflicting. If you don’t get this under control Kenzie, you’ll be relieved as team leader, and De Luca will take your place.” Kenzie stood up.

“Dismissed.” Said Cassie before Kenzie could open her mouth. She turned heel and left. She sat at her computer, and opened up all the copies of the others reports, and compared them to her own. They all matched perfectly, the way they had when she first read them. Mark dropped the formal reports on her desk.

“Check through these.” He said curtly. Kenzie felt hot, angry tears growing behind her eyes, and she brushed them aside. She pulled out each report. Every single one, barring her own, was different to the originals she had on the computer. Even Anna’s differed from her original. Kenzie realised what was going on, and her temper got the better of her. She slammed down the papers, scattering them on the floor, and stormed down the stairs. Anna, Kieran, Chris, Liam and Daniel were down stairs; Liam checking flight logs, Chris in the gym area, Daniel doing inventory, and Anna and Kieran still gazing at each other with love-struck eyes.

“What are you doing?” Yelled Kenzie. Everyone stopped what they were doing, staring at her.

“What do you mean?” Asked Daniel cautiously, setting down the clipboard he was writing on.

“I’ve seen the reports, the ones you submitted to me for checking and then submit to Mark? Every single one of them is different. Doesn’t match up like your originals do. Mark and Cassie hauled me in today because of it,” She said angrily.

“Kenzie…” started Daniel. She held up a hand in warning to him.

“No Daniel. If this is a joke guys, I’m not laughing. Neither is Mark or Cassie. If I don’t find out what’s going on with you all and why your reports are all altered, I’m going to be relieved as team leader. Does anyone care to explain?” She asked through clenched teeth. No-one said anything, preferring to stare away from her, at shoes, an ant on the floor. Anything but her.

“What are you doing to me?” Kenzie waited for an answer, but none was forthcoming. She pulled out the keys to her patrol, and reversed out, ignoring everyone. Daniel looked around.
“Seriously guys, what’s going on?” asked Daniel. Anna held up her hands.
“I know nothing,” she said. Chris sniggered, and Daniel rounded on him.

“Pike? Care to share?” he asked.

“De Luca, I’m so sick of her! She’s too young to be in charge of us. I’ve been trying to get her out for weeks, you’ve just not noticed. Kieran and Liam have been helping me too,” said Chris defensively.

“Are you serious?” asked Daniel. Chris stood up.

“Of course I’m serious. She’s a girl De Luca, and she shouldn’t be in charge of us! She’s nineteen, and she’s got to take care of us? I’ve been making her life hell since day one,” answered Chris vehemently. Daniel turned to Liam.

“Is it true?” he asked.

“Look, she’s a great rescue officer, but I just don’t think her true calling is being our team leader,” Liam answered passively. Anna pulled away from Kieran.

“How could you do this to Kenz?” she asked.

“Anna, don’t be like that. She hasn’t got the life experience to be a team leader yet. Maybe one day, but not now. Especially while we’re a part of an elite squad. We need the best to be leading us, not the youngest.” He tried to pull her close and hug her, but she pushed him away.

“Don’t touch me,” she said angrily. He shrank back from her.

“How did you change our reports?” asked Daniel.

“Well, changing ours was easy. Anna usually gave me hers to put in to Mark, so I modified it then,” said Kieran.

“What about my reports?” asked Daniel.

“We took them from Mark’s desk during the evening, after you all went home,” answered Liam. Daniel was so consumed with anger that he couldn’t speak. Anna walked out of the stationhouse.

“Anna, wait!” called Kieran, chasing after her.

“Why Kieran? This is ridiculous, you, Liam and Chris, trying to get rid of Kenzie, and instead of being adults and talking about it, you do this! I don’t even know what to think anymore!” She was crying now, and Kieran wanted to hold her. She wouldn’t let him, she was so upset.

“How could you do this to her?” she asked, finally allowing him to wrap his arms around her. He was full of remorse, not really knowing what to say to her. She cried into his chest, and he stroked her hair. He hadn’t thought about the other side of the picture, and how much this would have hurt not only Kenzie, but Anna.

“Anna, I’m sorry,” said Kieran quietly.

“Changing my reports Kieran? I thought you would have at least spoken to me. This is so juvenile, immature.”

“I know, I wasn’t really thinking, I shouldn’t have done it.” Anna nodded into his chest, and he continued stroking her hair. She walked back with him to the stationhouse, tension still between
them, but nothing that couldn’t be resolved. As they neared the garage, shouting could be heard. Kieran sprinted ahead, and found Daniel holding Chris in a tight headlock, Liam just sitting by, watching.

“Oi! Break it up!” Said Kieran, pulling Daniel off Chris. Chris fell to his knees, gasping as he struggled to breathe again. Daniel was panting, fighting against Kieran as he pulled Daniel back.

“You can’t do that! You can’t fight! We’re supposed to work together as a team, and here you three are, trying to break it up. If we get shut down, we have to return to our old stationhouses, and we will look like failures,” said Anna, standing in front of Daniel.

“Why would we have to listen to a woman though?” Asked Chris with scorn.

“You have a woman as your station manager, and Head Office is run by Chantelle Gregory. A woman, Chris. You don’t really have much choice in the matter, and if they say that Kenzie is to be our team leader, you either leave, or shut up and put up. None of these childish pranks. You do realize Kenzie can be kicked out for this? And if she leaves, Daniel is going to end up as our team leader, and if I were him, I’d be making your life a living hell.” Chris glared at her, but didn’t retaliate. Anna turned to Liam.

“Why the hell did you even go along with it? I thought you had more brains in you, honestly. You’ve seemed to work well with Kenz as team leader. What changed?” Asked Anna.

“I stopped and listened to Chris. It made sense at the time; Kenz is way too young to be a team leader, and I didn’t think we could talk to Mark or Cassie about it. I felt this was the best option.”

“Best option? You’re looking at ruining someone else’s career!” Daniel got himself free from Kieran.

“You’re all idiots. If I was team leader, I’d be reporting you all to Mark, and hoping you get reprimanded. Kenzie won’t report you all yet, because she thinks this is a practical joke, not some bizarre way of getting her fired. It doesn’t stop me reporting you three. You need to go and fix this with Kenzie, before she does something she regrets.” Daniel walked away into the locker room, slamming the door shut behind him. Chris smiled.

“I’m not apologizing. She deserves it,” said Chris. Anna walked straight up to him, and slapped him across the face, hard.

“Take that back,” she said softly. Chris shook his head as Mark came down the stairs. He stopped as he took in the scene unfolding before him.

“What the hell is going on?” He asked, glancing at each person in turn. Anna scowled at Chris.

“Well? Are you going to tell him?” Asked Anna, arms folded in front of her. Mark faced Chris, and folded his own arms.

“Tell me what?”

Kenzie sat in her apartment. She threw clothes into a suitcase haphazardly, not caring what she put in. Her laptop was open on her bed, and she logged onto Qantas, and organised a flight back to Perth. She was leaving this ridiculous job. She picked up her phone as she tossed more clothes out of the wardrobe, and dialled her mother.

“Mum, I’m coming back home. I’ve booked my flight, I should be there at around eleven. Can Dad pick me up?” Asked Kenzie.

“Sure, I guess so. Kenz, is everything alright?” Asked her mother, concerned.

“I’m leaving my job at rescue before they fire me. Maybe I’ll come back, do a university degree, go backpacking or something. I need time to think,” said Kenzie, feeling herself choke up.

“Okay darling. Whatever you feel you need to do, your father and I will support you.”

Mark stood, waiting for an answer. Kieran stood behind Anna, and Liam sat up straight, waiting to see what Chris would do. He merely smiled, leaning back comfortably. Anna held herself together for all of three seconds.

“Chris wants Kenzie gone. This is all his fault. He had the idea, and then he managed to convince Liam and Kieran to go along with it.” Mark was flabbergasted, confused as to why Chris would do something like that.

“Upstairs. All of you, now.” Mark was stern, his voice telling them that he was not to be messed with. Chris stood up, the stupid grin still plastered on his face, and headed up the stairs, Mark right behind him.

“Sit,” ordered Mark, pointing at a chair. Chris took a seat, and the others crowded around in the office. Mark knocked on Cassie’s door and stuck his head inside. He spoke quietly for a few moments, and then she came out. Her face echoed the anger and disbelief on Mark’s face.

“What were you thinking Pike?” Asked Casse, leaning against Kenzie’s vacant desk.

“She’s too young to be here! I thought you would have seen that by now, but you haven’t. You’re so blinded by making sure we’re filling in paperwork, abiding by head office, that you haven’t seen how incapable of managing a team she really is. She’s only nineteen, too immature to be looking after us,” answered Chris, his voice full of scorn.

“You have no choice in that Chris. Head Office, Mark and myself all agreed that whilst it would be a challenge for Kenz, she could do it. You don’t have a choice in the matter, and you should not have tried to take it into your own hands.” Cassie was furious.

“What did you do?” Asked Mark. Liam answered this time.

“We gave Kenzie one set of reports to check, and then we changed them, handed in conflicting reports.”

“How did you even manage to do that?” Asked Mark, shaking his head.

“We submitted our reports to her, and when she gave them back to us after she checked them, we altered the reports. We each altered our own, and then I changed Anna’s, and we went through your desk and took Daniel’s report so we could do the same,” answered Kieran.

“What did you think would happen? That we would find this out, and then make a happy team by removing Kenzie from the position as team leader?” Chris shrugged his shoulders.

“Hate to break it to you buddy, but it doesn’t work like that here. You’ve all been given an amazing opportunity to grow and expand in your field, and you’ve just gone and screwed that up. There were many more applicants who would have been capable of doing your job, but we chose
you instead. I’m wondering if that was a mistake,” said Cassie, finally regaining the power of speech.

“I don’t know. I didn’t really think about it, I’m just tired of her being here,” said Chris. Cassie ran her hands across her face, and sat down on Kenzie’s chair.

“Christopher Pike, you’re suspended without pay until further notice. Kieran Jackson, Liam Gordon, a note of this incident will be made on your permanent records. I can’t believe that you wouldn’t come and talk to me, or Mark, or even speak to Kenzie. You’ve done a lot of damage today, and it may be irreparable,” Cassie said tiredly. She stood up and returned to her office, shaking her head as she closed the door behind her.

“Chris, go home. You’re relieved of duty.” Mark’s voice was short and curt. Chris scowled at him angrily, and stormed out of the building, thundering down the stairs. Mark rubbed his face tiredly as Daniel, Anna, Liam and Kieran watched on silently. He finally looked up at the team, or what remained of it.

“Anna, Kieran and Liam, go wash the ropes and patrols, check the medi-packs, and check the oxygen tanks.” They nodded solemnly and walked down the stairs, leaving Daniel with Mark.

“How did I miss this De Luca?” Asked Mark.

“We missed it too, not just yourself Mark,” said Daniel. Mark turned to him.

“I need you to go talk to Kenzie, bring her round, see if you can get her to come back here,” said Mark.

“What if I can’t?” Asked Daniel.

“Then you find yourself promoted to team leader.” Daniel nodded, and pulled out his phone, dialling Kenzie’s number. She answered on the third ring, and she sounded upset.

“Hello?”

“Kenz, it’s Daniel. Chris admitted to doing it, and he’s been suspended. You’ve got to come back,” said Daniel. He could hear loud talking in the background, the phones tinny speakers distorting the words.

“Kenzie, what’s that?” He asked.

“It doesn’t matter. Look, Daniel, I’m sorry, but I can’t come back. I need some time to think,” said Kenzie, sounding distracted.

“Can’t we talk about it? I’ll come meet you. Where are you?” He asked, grabbing his keys from his desk.

“You’re too late Daniel. I’m at the airport.”

Kenzie sat at the airport. Her flight was delayed due to weather conditions, and she sat in the business class lounge, sipping her macchiato as she flipped through a magazine. Her phone rang, and she glanced at the caller I.D. It was Daniel again. She rejected the call, and returned to her reading.

She just didn’t care anymore…
Daniel slammed his phone down on the desk. Mark came out of Cassie’s office.

“What’s going on?” He asked.

“She’s at the airport. I think she’s leaving, but she won’t talk to me,” said Daniel, frustrated.

“Go after her,” said Cassie, standing in her doorway. Daniel ran his hands through his hair.

“What makes you think she’s going to listen to me? She thinks I was in on it with everyone,” replied Daniel.

“She cares for you De Luca, and she’ll listen. You think I haven’t seen the two of you? I’m surprised Kenzie doesn’t just announce it from the roof.” Daniel looked at her, confused.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“She loves you Daniel. No matter how hard she tries to deny it, it’s still there. Go after her Daniel.” He was spurred on by Cassie’s enthusiasm, and grabbed his keys. He ran down the stairs and into his patrol. As he drove, he thought about Cassie’s words.

She loves you Daniel…

He had always hoped that maybe she felt the same way, but after her rejection last time, he’d withdrawn from her. He still kept her company, but didn’t get too close. He floored the accelerator, hoping he’d get to the airport in time.

Chris sat in his tiny apartment. He hated her, hated what she had done to the team. He held a vendetta against her. He should have been made team leader, not her. In the history of rescue teams in Australia and New Zealand, a female had only been made team leader once, other than Kenzie. And that woman had been removed from her position after three weeks, after her team made it hell for her. Chris had hoped for the same outcome, but it hadn’t worked. He kicked his bed post, frustrated. All he achieved for his efforts was a bruised foot, and he swore angrily. He swung a fist into the wall, the plaster crumbling under the force of his fist. He knew from the beginning that he would never fit in here, and so far, he had been right. He missed working in Canberra, where his station was all-male. He made the decision right then. It was time to leave, give up on this station. Someone else would gladly take his place, and would probably get along better with the team as well. He had few belongings here, preferring to leave his things in Canberra when he moved. He had a few clothes, little personal effects, and his car. He threw what little he had into his gym bag, zipped it shut, and headed down the stairs. He tossed the bag into the car, and slid into front seat. He revved the engine, and sped out of the garage. With no stops, it would take him around three hours to get to Canberra.

“Plenty of time to think,” he said out loud to himself. He headed for the Pacific Highway, watching as Sydney blurred past his windows. He knew he was doing the right thing, and he wouldn’t have done anything differently. Kenzie would be fine, Daniel would make things right for her. Somehow, he always knew he would be leaving sooner than the rest of the team. He turned up the radio, and focussed on his goal.

Heading home…

Cassie sat in her office, head in her hands. She knew she would have to transfer Chris, put a mark on his permanent record. She didn’t want to, but that’s what it had come to. She opened the files on
her computer. Mark joined her in her office, sitting across from her.

“Transfer?” He asked. She nodded.

“Transfer him back to where he came from; he just messaged me to say he’s leaving.” Cassie could have cried. He was perfect for the job, if only he could get over this problem of women in power. Cassie flipped through the files on her desktop.

“Rebecca Lucas’s name keeps coming up,” she said to Mark. He joined her around her side of the desk, looking over her file.

“She’s done training in New Zealand as well as Australia. Could definitely be a confident employee to have, and would balance out the teams a little more. Fingers crossed Liam works well with her,” said Mark, returning to his seat.

“Are you sure Chris is leaving though? I mean, he’s got so much talent as a rescue employee, if he wasn’t so bullheaded,” said Cassie desperately. Mark shook his head.

“It will be for the best. You know that as well as I do that he wouldn’t have survived much longer here before we made him leave.” Cassie nodded her head slowly, and picked up her phone.

“Dismissed. I’ve got to make some phone calls.”

Daniel pulled up out the front of the airport, and left the patrol in the taxi zone, lights flashing. If they towed it, he didn’t care. He had to make sure Kenzie came back, so he could tell her how he really felt, tell her that she was worth everything. He would stand by her no matter what. De Luca sprinted through the airport, weaving through tired and hassled looking passengers. He had no idea where he would be going to find her, and then remembered that she said she lived in Perth. He glanced up at the departure board, frantically searching for the flight for Perth. He found it, and it’s status read BOARDING. Daniel ran like he’d never run before. He knocked over a small child, and felt the guilt permeate his being. He set her to rights, and continued on his sprint. He got to the gate just as they declared it closed. He knew he wouldn’t be able to get in, and watched from the glass windows as the plane taxied down the runway, and was gone. He fell to his knees, and buried his face in his hands.

“She’s gone…”

After what felt like hours, Daniel finally got to his feet. Passengers skirted around him, not knowing what to do. Daniel noticed security guards standing nearby, watching him. He got to his feet, heart heavy. Kenzie was gone, and he didn’t know what he would do without her. He trudged through the airport, and glanced into the business class lounge. He stopped, thinking that he must have been crazy. He could swear that Kenzie was sitting in the lounge, reading a magazine. He shook his head and continued walking. Something stopped him, and he headed back to the lounge. He flashed his business class card to the security, and they allowed him in hesitantly. He started to approach the woman, and she glanced up at the same time he looked at her.

“Kenzie?” He asked incredulously.

“Daniel? What are you doing here?” she asked. He sat down next to her, relieved.

“Chris has been suspended, Liam and Kieran are being punished for what’s happened, everything will be okay. You can come back.” Kenzie shook her head.

“No. Not yet,” she said quietly.
“Why not? You’re great at your job Kenzie, don’t let anyone convince you otherwise,” said Daniel.

“And how long will it be before someone else has an issue with me being in the position of team leader? There has only ever been one other female in a leadership position in rescue, and she survived three weeks before her team made her life hell. How do I know that’s not going to happen to me?” She asked. A tear slid down her cheek, and Daniel moved to wipe it away. She swatted his hand away. He put his hand down, and looked at Kenzie.

“Look, Kenzie, I should have said this a long time ago, but I haven’t. I love you Kenzie, and I can’t imagine my life without you, being in Elite, being with you every possible moment,” he said. He took her hand.

“I’m willing to wait forever, if that’s what it means to get you. I can’t stand thinking that you’ll be on the other side of the country. Just don’t leave,” pleaded Daniel. Kenzie blushed a deep red, and looked him in the eyes.

“Daniel, I’ve felt the same way, I just didn’t know what to do. I’m only nineteen, and I’m pretty sure I still have some growing up to do. Are you willing to help me do that?” She asked. Daniel nodded exuberantly.

“I’ll do anything for you Kenz. Will you stay?” She nodded, and they embraced. He picked up her bag, and they walked out of the airport, holding hands. He put her bag into the back of the patrol, and Kenzie climbed into the passenger seat.

“I thought I’d already lost you today,” said Daniel as he pulled out from the curb.


“I checked the departure board. I knew you would be going back home to Perth, and the flight for Perth was boarding when I arrived. I ran down to the gates, knocked over a little girl, but when I got there, the gates had closed. I watched the plane taxi down the runway, and I was devastated. I couldn’t believe that you would just leave, without really saying goodbye. I almost walked past you in the lounge, didn’t think it was you. I’m so glad I came back,” said Daniel happily. He was exulted that Kenzie was still here. All he needed to do now was sort out the problem with Chris.

His phone rang, and he hit the answer button on his Bluetooth.

“Daniel and Kenzie speaking, what’s up?” He asked, turning the corner.

“De Luca, Kenz, Chris has left. He’s asked for a transfer back to Canberra, and he’s not returning.” Daniel nearly jumped on the brakes at Marks words.

“He’s gone?” Asked Daniel.

“Yes, Head Office confirmed it an hour ago. We’ve already found a replacement, and she’s arriving at Sydney airport in a few hours. You two might like to head back there, hang out for a little while.” Daniel pulled a U-turn through the traffic, and headed back to the airport.

“Where’s she coming from Mark?” Asked Kenzie.

“She’s an Australian girl, Rebecca Lucas, who’s been doing some work in New Zealand, and was beat out in interviews by Chris. She’s pretty much next in line. We called her twenty minutes ago, and fast-tracked a flight for her. You two are closest, so you two can pick her up, get to know her. Sound okay?” Asked Mark.

“Sounds fine Mark. I’ll message you when we pick her up,” said Daniel, concentrating on the
“She’ll be staying at Cassie’s as well, until she gets her own place. If you can drop her there when you pick her up, that would be good,” said Mark.

“Okay. Catch you later then Mark.” Daniel ended the phone call.


“I know the best little coffee place in the airport. Hurry up and find a parking spot, and I’ll take you there,” said Kenzie. Daniel pulled into the nearest car spot, and killed the engine.

“Let’s go find it,” he said, laughing at her. She dragged him along through the terminal, until she came to the tiny shop.

“When I travel overseas, this is where I get my macchiato fix before I fly out. They make some of the best coffee.” Daniel nodded.

“Order whatever; it’s on me,” said Daniel. Kenzie ordered drinks for them both, and they sat in companionable silence, enjoying each other’s company.

“What do you think she’s like?” Asked Kenzie, sipping her coffee.

“No idea, but she’s going to be good. She was second only to Chris in interviews, so she’s got to be good,” commented Daniel. The flight that Rebecca was on was announced at arrivals, and Kenzie and Daniel walked down to the arrival gates. They waited, not knowing what she looked like. Daniel was glad he was still wearing his Elite uniform, and watched as a young girl, about twenty, walked out of the gates. She had an air about her, like so many paramedics and rescue workers do. She collected her bag, and saw Daniel. She walked over to them confidently, and shook Daniel’s hand.

“Hi, I’m Rebecca Lucas.” Daniel shook her hand.

“I’m Daniel De Luca, and this is the Elite team leader, Kenzie Worthington. Pleased to meet you.” Daniel picked up her bag, and they walked back to the patrol.

“So, I’m in the team then?” Asked Rebecca, a little confused. Kenzie nodded.

“One of our team members had an issue with his role in the team, and opted to return home instead of continuing on. You were next in line for any of our positions, and our station manager rang you and organised to get you over here,” answered Kenzie.

“Well, that’s great! I’m looking forward to being a part of your team,” said Rebecca excitedly. Kenzie turned in her seat.

“So, Rebecca…” Rebecca cut her off.

“Please. I only use Rebecca when my parents are around, or when I’m in formal dealings. Call me Bec or Bex,” she said. Kenzie nodded.

“Call me Kenz then. So Bex, what made you decide to choose Rescue?” Asked Kenzie.

“I’ve always been interested in Rescue. I’ve seen some of what Special Ops has done, and even been in an accident that’s involved Special Ops coming out to get me out of a car. After I saw that happen, I decided that it’s where I wanted to be. I’ve done almost every training course available,
and I’ve worked in most major cities, and New Zealand was my last stop. Now I’m here with you guys, and I’m looking forward to working with you all. Who else is in the team?” Asked Bex. Kenzie counted them off her fingers.

“We have a full team again, and all of us specialise in something. There’s Daniel here, and he does water rescues, Liam, who flies our chopper, Kieran is a speed driver, and Anna is our paramedic. I think that’s everyone,” said Kenzie, glancing at Daniel.

“You forgot yourself,” prompted Bex.

“Oh, I’m a climber. Abseiling, rock-climbing, anything like that.” Bex nodded.

“Wow, you guys sound like you’re all really talented.” Kenzie shook her head.

“Not really. We just have different aspects of rescue we enjoy more,” she said, laughing a little.

“Well, according to my last station co-ordinator, Bruce, I had a talent for finding people. We had a building collapse near our station, and they thought they had everyone out. Even the search dogs didn’t find anything. I had a gut feeling that there were still people in there, and I was proved right after we extracted four other people. I guess that’s my thing,” said Bex. Daniel pulled up into the garage at Elite, and Kenzie led her upstairs. Cassie came out of her office, and embraced Kenzie.

“Glad you decided to stay,” she whispered into Kenzie’s ear. Kenzie smiled at Cass.

“So am I. This is Bex. Bex, this is Cassie, our station manager. Mark, our station co-ordinator. Be warned, he will make you clean ropes,” said Kenzie, joking. Mark shook Bex’s hand.

“Not today. Anna, Kieran and Liam have been washing ropes, patrols, anything I can throw at them,” said Mark smiling. Anna, Kieran and Liam came up the stairs, Anna drying her hair.

“Bex, this is Anna, Kieran and Liam.” Each one of them came up and introduced themselves to her. She couldn’t stop smiling.

“It’s so good to be here!” She exclaimed, excited.

“So where am I staying? I’ll get my own place at some point, but somewhere to stay tonight would be amazing,” said Bex. Cassie opened her mouth to speak, but Kenzie jumped in over the top of her.

“I’ve got room at my place. I’m happy if you want to stay there,” said Kenzie. She knew Cassie had family, and to have Bex there would be intruding. Bex smiled at Kenzie.

“Sure, I’d love to,” said Bex.

“Well Rebecca, we’re glad to have you here as a part of Elite, and hopefully we will get around to introducing you to the Special Ops team.” Bex smiled at the team standing around you.

“I’m happy to be here. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity,” answered Bex. After a few more minutes of talking, Kenzie and Bex headed out the door, and into Kenzie’s patrol.

“I’m looking forward to starting work on Monday. You guys all look amazing,” said Bex, watching out the window as Sydney blurred past.

“We’re pretty excited that you’re here. It’ll be amazing. We’ll have your uniform in on Monday, your patrol will be finished then too, and Head Office is supposed to find you somewhere to live.
Pretty sure that should be done on Monday as well,” said Kenzie.

“You’re all so… organised. I think I’m going to like it here,” said Bex. Kenzie pulled up into her apartment.

“We hope you like it too Bex.”
Episode 6: Water Falls

Episode 1.6 – Water Falls…

The rain fell gently on the tin roof. Sandie tucked her young children into bed, and sat in her room to read quietly. The rain started to fall harder, and Sandie was soothed by it, falling asleep quickly. She was woken by her children screaming, and as she put her feet down on the floor, she noticed the water soaking into her woollen carpet. She wondered if she’d left a tap on, flooding the house. She looked outside the window, but couldn’t see anything through the dark windows. She moved to her children’s room, hushing them as she came in. She left them for a few moments, and opened the front door, trying to see where the water was coming from. It continued to rise up her ankles, her calves, her knees. Sandie realised her house was flooding, and there was nothing she could do…

Kenzie pushed Daniel away gently.

“I need to finish this report, and we’ve got to take Bex out for a trial run,” said Kenzie. He smiled at her, and kissed her neck again. Anna walked in just as Daniel kissed her.

“Oh lord, you two, get a room!” Said Anna. They heard Cassie’s phone ring in her office, and she answered it. Kenzie disregarded the phone call, thinking that it was insignificant. Kieran came up, and sat behind Anna, massaging her shoulders.

“Dinner tonight?” He asked. She nodded.

“Sounds good.” Mark came out of Cassie’s office.

“Grab your bags. We’re heading to Queensland to deal with floods up there. SES is struggling to keep up with all the callouts, and all Queensland Rescue units are stretched to breaking point. We’re next to go and help out.” Mark disappeared down the stairs, grabbing kits and such, throwing them into the back of the patrols. They would head out to one of the emergency bases, and a private jet would get them up to Brisbane, or at least as close as the possibly could. It would only take them an hour and a half to get there, and Mark already dreaded to think what would be going on up there. He hated to leave his wife and son, but it was the safest option for both of them to stay here in Sydney. Cassie would be staying back here as well. Mark, Liam, Kieran, and Anna jumped into one of the patrols, and headed out. Daniel, Kenzie and Bex weren’t far behind in the other patrol, and they sped out to the airport. Once they were together and on the plane, Mark handed out the assignments to each team member.

“Teams will be mixed for the next week or so as we work with SES to get these people out alive. Kenzie, you and Liam will be taking a chopper out with Anna to do some aerial rescues. Daniel, you will be teamed up with Bex and Kieran to do water search and rescue in tandem with the police team. I’m heading up the base of operations at Toowoomba, and I’ll be in radio contact with you the whole time.” As they flew over Queensland, they leant to peer out the window, and Bex gasped.

“There’s so much water, so much damage,” said Bex. The plane descended and landed precariously, the rain still pouring down. A van was waiting for them at the small airstrip, and the driver waved them over, pushing open the doors. They ran over to the van, and climbed in, already drenched.
“You’re the Elite team?” Asked the driver. Mark nodded, and the driver sped away.

“I’m to take you up to the Toowoomba base, and the team leader there will direct you to your stations. Do you have a chopper pilot?” Asked the man.

“I’m here. Do you guys have a fuelled chopper ready?” Asked Liam.

“It’s waiting for you. All other pilots are out in the field, and we could use you.” The driver pulled up out front of a school hall.

“This is the main centre at the moment. Dave Thorne is the guy you’re looking for.” Mark thanked the driver, and the team ran inside, trying to get away from the pelting rain. Once inside, a large burly man came up and shook Mark’s hand.

“I’m Davo. You must be the Elite Squad.” Mar nodded.

“ Heard you’ve got a chopper team for me?” He asked.

“We’ve got the pilot, Liam Gordon, paramedic Anna Hunt, and our resident climbing and abseiling expert Kenzie Worthington. You might want a fourth person on, I’m not sure.” Dave nodded, and waved one of his own men over.

“This is Jeremy, and he’ll make the fourth leg of your team. He’ll take you over to the chopper.” Kenz, Liam and Anna followed Jeremy outside into the pouring rain. David looked at the three remaining members.

“You three must be the water rescue team. You’re heading out with the police crew now. Which one of you is the leader?” Asked David, glancing at Bex, Kieran and Daniel each in turn.

“Daniel is the leader of this team. Okay by you?” Asked Mark. David nodded as a police officer joined them.

“This is Officer Caitlin Keller. She’s in charge of the police team. Caitlin, Daniel.” They each shook hands, and disembarked, leaving Mark with David.

“Come with me, we’ve got a work area set up for you. How are your management skills?” Asked David, walking quickly towards the centre of the room.

“I’d like to think they’re okay.” David directed him to one of desks. A radio sat on it, and a whiteboard with the area map drawn out for him.

“We need a team co-ordinator. Sandie, our regular SES team co-ordinator, hasn’t reported for work.”

Kenzie looked over what little she could see of Queensland. The brown murky water covered houses, swallowing them easily. Kenzie hated to think how many people would be lost in the cold waters, and hoped she could help some people at least. Jeremy pointed past Kenzie down to a rooftop. The rest of the house was submerged.

“That’s our first drop point,” he shouted over the blades. Kenzie squinted, and could just make out the outlines of two small people, huddled on the tiles. She checked her harness.

“Let’s go,” she said, bracing herself. Jeremy nodded, and they lowered her down to the roof. Two
small children, a boy and a girl, were holding each other tightly. The girl was whimpering quietly, and the boy was rubbing her back gently. Kenzie made it down on the roof, and Jeremy gave her rope some slack.

“Hi, I’m Kenzie. We’re going to take you up in the helicopter. What are your names?” She asked, securing a harness around the girl. She clung to Kenzie, frightened.

“That’s my sister Elise, and I’m Edward,” said the boy.

“Well Edward, I’m going to take your sister up to the helicopter, and then I’ll be back for you, okay?” He nodded, and Kenzie motioned up to Jeremy. He winched her up.

“Anna, this is Elise, can you look after her?” Yelled Kenzie. Anna nodded, and took the girl from Kenzie. She screamed, frightened of everything going on.

“Just go Kenz, get the other child. She’ll be fine,” said Anna. Kenzie nodded, and winched down again. Edward was waiting for her.

“Please, have you seen our Mum? She helped us up here, but she didn’t come back,” said Edward.

“It’s okay Edward, we have a lot of evacuation centres, and a lot of teams out finding people and rescuing them. We’ll find your mum, okay?” He nodded as they made it to the helicopter. Jeremy sat with Edward in the back of the helicopter, wrapping a warm blanket around him. Kenzie climbed into the co-pilot seat, and pulled a headset on.

“Mark just gave us our next grid area,” said Liam through the headset.

“Something tells me this is going to be a long week,” said Kenzie, glancing out the rain streaked windows. Liam started making his way down the river, until Kenzie noticed something.

“Stop! Liam, just wait for a second,” she said urgently. She grabbed her binoculars, and peered through them. There was a woman stuck in a tree, hanging unnaturally. Kenzie tossed the binoculars aside, and pulled her headset off. She moved into the back of the helicopter again, and Jeremy looked at her, confused.

“What’s going on?” He asked. He shifted Edward closer to Anna, and helped Kenzie hook herself up. She leant out the side door.

“There’s a woman stuck in a tree over there, and I think she might be in trouble,” said Kenzie. Jeremy looked down into the treeline.

“I don’t see anything!” He yelled.

“Trust me!”

Daniel, Bex and Kieran climbed carefully into the boat with Officer Caitlin. They’d hurriedly changed into their wetsuits before running outside into the rain again.

“So what’s the plan?” Asked Daniel. Caitlin had changed as well, and was managing the boat engine.

“We’ve had reports of people missing, some places where houses couldn’t even be evacuated before the water hit. We’re going out to search some of the waterways and houses, see if we can
find anyone. We’ve got you three here as well so we have some paramedics on at least one of the
teams.” Daniel nodded as the boat easily made its way upstream.

“We’re starting from the top of the river, checking houses. A lot of people here haven’t checked in
at evacuation centres, and family members are worried that they can’t find them. Our job is to find
whoever we can.” Daniel nodded, and they neared the first street of houses. At least, it used to be a
street. Now it was a water-filled dam, roofs the only thing visible. The water was receding slowly,
enough that the teams could get inside the houses. Daniel slipped over the edge of the boat into the
frigid water. Kieran moved to come with him, and Daniel stopped him.

“I know you can do this, and I need to see what Bex can do. Let her go instead,” said Daniel.
Kieran nodded, and Bex climbed into the water, shivering a little. Caitlin cut the engine, securing
the boat on a post, and passed oxygen tanks down to each Daniel and Bex. Normally, they
wouldn’t need them, but floodwaters were so unpredictable that Daniel felt it a necessary
precaution. He ducked under the water for a second, feeling like he was back home again. Bex tied
her hair back, and they headed into one of the houses, carefully treading through the water. Daniel
knew that after this week, Cassie would have them all pulled up for counselling. He hoped that he
would find people alive, but knew there was a definite possibility that there would be some people
he couldn’t get to. They stepped carefully into the house, their heads just clearing the ceiling. It
was eerily quiet, rushing water the only sound that could be heard. Daniel heard a thump and
stopped.

“You okay Bex?” He asked, thinking she had slipped.

“I’m fine,” she replied. They continued moving forward. A knocking sound was heard this time.
Daniel stopped abruptly, and Bex nearly ran into him.

“Tell me you heard that,” he said breathlessly. Bex nodded.

“It sounds like its coming from the roof,” said Bex. Daniel tapped back.

“Hello?” Called a weary voice from the roof.

“Hi, we’re from Rescue. How many of you are up there?” Daniel called.

“Five, and a baby. Can you help us out?” asked the feminine voice.

“Yeah, we’re getting to you now,” Daniel called back. He moved forward, and looked back to see
that Bex was following him. She wasn’t. He waded back to her.

“Come on,” he said. Bex shook her head.

“There’s someone in the living room,” she said quietly.

“How do you know that?” Asked Daniel. Bex changed directions, heading for the living room.

“Just trust me.”

Bex waded through the water, stepping down the two stairs into the open living area. She looked
around, trying to confirm her gut feeling. Daniel stayed for a few moments, and then returned to
the bathroom, where the access hole to the roof was. Bex stepped forward, and felt something
brush past her leg. She dismissed it, putting her hands in the water, trying to work out if there really
was anyone in there. An object floated in front of her, and she pushed it away. As it moved away, it
rolled over, and Bex realised it was a body, a girl, around the same age as her. Her eyes were wide
and glassy, fear forever etched into her stare. Her skin was cold, her hair floating in the murky
water. The shock hit Bex, and she started screaming, trying to back away. Her feet tripped and she slipped under the water. Her head made contact with a submerged bookcase, and she lost consciousness…

Daniel helped the first girl down. Caitlin and Kieran had joined them inside to help the survivors out to their boat.

“Have you seen Hannah?” Asked the little girl. Daniel shook his head.

“Who’s Hannah?” He asked as he passed her to Kieran.

“My big sister. She was helping us up into the roof when the water came through. She told us not to worry, and that she’d come up, but then the water came through,” said the seven-year-old, clinging to Kieran. Caitlin glanced around.

“Where’s Bex?” She asked. Her question was answered by a shriek and splashing water.

“Kieran, get her out. Caitlin, stay with the others here. I’m going to check on Bex,” Daniel ordered. Kieran took the girl out, and Caitlin hoisted herself up into the roof, keeping the others company. Daniel waded out to the living room where Bex last was, and looked around.

“Bex!” He called, glancing around the room. He noticed the dark shape floating in front of him, and as he moved it, he realised it was warm. He rolled it over, and realised it was Bex.

“Oh God.” He heard another boat sputter to a halt outside, and then Kieran came splashing back inside.

“Kieran! Help me get her out to the boat!” Called Daniel as the water police flooded into the room. He shuffled them along to where Caitlin was, and they dragged Bex out to the boat. Kieran hauled himself in, and then lifted Bex up. Her body was limp, and the bleeding lump on the front of her head didn’t look good either. Daniel rolled himself into the boat.

“Her hearts still beating, she’s just not breathing,” said Kieran. Daniel nodded, and started the compressions to her chest. Kieran checked over the wound as Daniel counted his compressions.

“Come on Bex, breathe!” He muttered under his breath. Kieran watched on. In the background, Caitlin and the other officers moved the others into their boat, and moved away. Caitlin watched on silently, not daring to touch the boat.

“Come on Bex, breathe!”

Jeremy lowered Kenzie down, watching her carefully. She felt her legs hit the freezing water first, and was glad that she’d thought to put on her wetsuit before starting.

“Ma’am?” She called. The woman was trapped in the fork of the tree, her arm twisted unnaturally around. Kenzie strapped the harness around the woman’s middle.

“Kenzie to Jeremy. Winch it up slowly; she’s caught in the tree,” said Kenzie into her radio.

“Jeremy to Kenzie. I’ll take it up about half a metre. Sound okay?” Asked Jeremy from his perch in the helicopter. Anna had shifted Edward and Elise to the side, getting her gear ready for the next patient.
“Kenzie to Jeremy, go ahead.” The winch pulled up slowly, and the woman dislodged. Kenzie motioned for Jeremy to stop, and the winch grated to a halt. The woman’s face was bleeding and swollen, and Kenzie surmised that she had probably hit a tree when she was sucked into the raging rapids.

“Kenzie to Jeremy. Winch us up,” said Kenzie. Jeremy hit the switch, and the two were brought up slowly. As they neared the helicopter, Kenzie made sure the woman’s arms were tucked in, and then Jeremy helped pull her into the helicopter. Anna was all over her, checking her vitals.

“She’s not breathing,” uttered Anna. Edward sat up straight, almost toppling his sister off his shoulder.

“Mum?” He said softly. Jeremy looked at him.

“Stay there mate, let us look after her,” said Jeremy. He jumped in the co-pilot chair.

“Take us to the nearest hospital, medical base. Whatever you can get to, okay?” Demanded Jeremy. Liam glanced at Jeremy, and then nodded.

“Copy that,” said Liam. Jeremy climbed back again, slamming the helicopter door shut. Edward tossed off the foil blanket.

“That’s my Mum!” He said, distressed. Jeremy moved around Kenzie and Anna, and sat in front of Edward.

“Okay, we know this is your mum, and we’ll look after her, okay?” Edward nodded. Kenzie started compressions on the woman as Anna strapped an oxygen mask to her face. She pulled the arm out from its abnormal position, and quickly splinted it into a straight position.

“Come on, don’t do this,” said Kenzie through gritted teeth.

“Inserting IV,” said Anna. Kenzie nodded, and continued working on the woman. Elise woke up from her sleeping position, curled up on the floor.

“Mummy?” She asked sleepily, rubbing her eyes.

“Mummy? I want Mummy,” she said, tearing up.

“Elise, Mummy’s just having a sleep, okay? You need to be quiet, you don’t want to wake her up, do you?” Asked Jeremy. Elise shook her head.

“No,” she whispered.


“Edward, can you tell me your mother’s name?” He asked. Edward nodded.

“Her name is Sandie.”

Bex coughed, the water flooding out of her mouth. Kieran and Daniel rolled her on her side, and she started crying. Her chest hurt, her head ached, and she just wanted to sleep. Caitlin released a breath she didn’t even know she’d been holding, and pulled herself into the boat.
“That’s it Bex. Just breathe,” said Daniel. Bex sucked in deep breaths, grateful that she could breathe again. She closed her eyes.

“Don’t close your eyes Bex. Stay awake for us,” said Kieran. She forced her heavy lids open again, focussing on Daniel.

“Caitlin, take us back to base. She can’t stay out here with us,” said Daniel. Caitlin nodded, and fired up the engine. Bex shook her head, and tried to sit up.

“No,” she whispered.

“There’s no choice Bex. We need you to get checked out, make sure that head wound isn’t anything more serious.” She nodded her defeat, and Kieran wrapped a towel around her shoulders. The boat moved swiftly through the waters, and before they knew it, they’d arrived back at base. Bex went to stand up, and her whole world shifted. She sat back down quickly.

“You okay?” Asked Daniel, concerned. She put a hand to her head, hoping to stop the spinning. Caitlin beached the boat, and held it steady as Daniel and Kieran supported Bex. Mark came charging out of the centre, ready to berate them for leaving their post, when he noticed the bleeding injury. She was unsteady on her feet.

“This way. The medics are inside,” said Mark, ushering them in the doors. Caitlin stayed with the boat.

“What happened?” Asked Mark. Daniel shrugged his shoulders as he set Bex down on a bench. She leant back against the wall, closing her eyes. Daniel shook her shoulder.

“Stay awake for me Bex,” he reminded her. He turned to Mark.

“We were going in to get some survivors out. Bex said she had a gut feeling that someone was in the loungeroom, and we left her to go and check. I moved towards the back of the house, and Caitlin and Kieran came in to help. Next minute we hear a scream. I leave Kieran and Caitlin to get the others out, and go back to Bex. Found her face down in the water. Pulled her out, revived her, that’s it,” said Daniel. Mark nodded, and dismissed Daniel and Kieran. He needed them out working. He took a seat across from Bex, and clasped his hands together.

“What happened out there?” He asked. Bex pulled her knees up to her chest.

“I… I went into the lounge. I had this feeling like someone was there, and Daniel let me go and check. There were so many things floating in that room, and I pushed something aside.” Bex started sobbing.

“It was a body! A girl! How could I just be so blasé? It was a woman, just floating there, no dignity, just… floating.” Bex was almost hysterical now, and Mark could understand why. In Rescue, it was rare to face death in such a way. It was more common to have someone die on you, or for them to appear peaceful. Drowning added a whole new perspective to Rescue, and Mark knew he would have to organise counselling for his team. A medic joined them, and Mark laid a reassuring hand on her leg.

“It’ll be okay. Let the medic look over you, and then we’ll talk more.” Bex nodded, hiccupping. The medic looked over her head wound, and pulled out a suture kit. A commotion sounded up the other end of the building, and Mark ran through to the back. The helicopter was landing in the courtyard, and Mark noted that it was Liam’s helicopter. Medics stood by as Liam cut the engines. Jeremy pulled open the door, and Mark ducked under the blades.
"This is Elise, and her older brother Edward," said Jeremy. Mark took Elise from Jeremy, and another medic helped Edward down. Mark passed Elise onto one of the medics, and climbed up into the chopper.

"Who’s the patient?" Asked Mark, taking the IV line off Anna.

"Her name is Sandie. Don’t know her last name. Found in a tree, broken wrist, dislocated shoulder, broken fingers, head laceration, broken nose. Not sure what else, but pulse is weak and thready, and we’re pretty sure she’s taken on water," said Kenzie. Anna was applying pressure to the head graze, trying to stop the flow of blood.

"Right. We’ll get her inside, and then see about moving her to a hospital," said Mark. Anna shook her head.

"No. It was hard enough to get her here, and to keep her alive. I can do more for her if she stays here," said Anna. Mark nodded.

"Right. Anna, stay with her. Kenzie, fill in Dave on the situation, and then head out with Liam and Jeremy again." Kenzie nodded, and left to tell Dave, only to run into him.

"What’s going on?" He asked. He stopped as he saw Sandie lying on the bed, barely clinging to life.

"Wha..? Where did you find her?" He asked.

"She’d been swept into a tree. We had to remove her carefully. Her two kids are here," said Kenzie. Dave glanced around, obviously looking for them.

"One of the medics has them," said Mark. Dave nodded.

"She was supposed to come into work today. I had no idea she was actually caught in the flood, I thought she was staying somewhere else," said Dave quietly.

"We’re keeping her here at the moment, and Anna will keep an eye on her, monitor her condition. She’s not out of the woods yet," said Mark sadly. Dave nodded again. Kenzie slipped quietly out of the room, needing to return to work. Sandie wasn’t the only person she could rescue; there would be more. Mark stood with David for a few more moments, when a blonde head poked around the corner, and Mark realised it was Elise. She glanced up at Dave,

"Daddy?"

"Daddy?" Mark said disbelievingly. Dave picked up Elise.

"Sandie is my wife," said David softly, burying his head in Elise’s hair. An off-duty doctor joined Anna with Sandie, and Anna was relieved. Mark left Dave and his children with Sandie, and led Anna out into the small kitchen area.

"Coffee?" He asked. Anna nodded, leaning back against the wall. Mark handed her a Styrofoam cup, and Anna accepted the cup gratefully.

"Thanks." Mark sat across from her.

"What’s it like out there?" He asked. Anna sipped her coffee.

"It’s brown, muddy water that we can’t see through. It warps your sense of where things are, it
covers trees, houses. You name it, and it’s probably underwater.” Anna ran her hands through her hair, pulling it back into a loose ponytail. She rested for a few minutes, and then heard a cry.

“Please! Help me!” Came a male voice. Anna jumped up from the table, upsetting her coffee. She didn’t care, just grabbed her medi-kit and ran out of the tiny kitchen area. Mark was close behind her. She followed the voice, and found Bex slumped down the wall, her lips tinged a pale blue.

“Bex? Bex, can you hear me?” Asked Anna loudly, crouching down next to her.

“What’s going on with her?” Asked Mark.

“I think she’s hypoxic. Pulmonary edema. Pull out the oxygen mask,” ordered Anna, unfolding her stethoscope. She could hear the rattling in Rebecca’s chest, and hauled her upright. She tossed the stethoscope aside.

“Pass me oxygen mask,” demanded Anna. Mark passed it to her, and Anna held it to Rebecca’s face.

“Come on Bex, you can do it,” said Anna. She pulled out a bottle of Lasix pills and GTN pills.

“Give her one of each,” said Anna, still holding the mask on. Mark unscrewed each bottle, and tipped out a small tablet from each, handing them to Anna. She carefully gave each of them to Bex, watching her carefully. Her breathing started to ease up, and the colour flushed back to her face. Dave came and tapped Mark on the shoulder, and asked him to follow him back to the command desk. Mark glanced at Anna.

“We’ll be fine; don’t worry,” said Anna, settling herself next to Bex.

“I’m sorry,” whispered Bex, the tears coursing down her cheeks.

“What for?” Asked Anna, bewildered.

“For everything that happened today.” Anna shook her head.

“Bex, you didn’t go out and drown on purpose, did you?” Asked Anna in mock seriousness. Bex cracked a smile and shook her head.

“No,” she answered.

“Then don’t worry about it. It was your first real callout, and to be honest, it’s pretty messy out there. It’s understandable to feel a little overwhelmed. We’re only here for a few days at a time, so we can rest and recover in between. We’ll get back to Sydney in a few days, and then we’ll talk about this. Whatever you do though, don’t cover it up if you’re having a hard time coping. It’s the worst thing you can do,” commented Anna. She helped Bex to her feet.

“Come on, I’ll take you to the infirmary area, you can at least lie down where I can see you and keep working,” said Anna. Bex nodded, and followed Anna unsteadily, oxygen mask still attached. Anna settled her on a bed near Sandie’s, and hooked her up to an IV drip.

“I just want to make sure you stay hydrated,” said Anna. Bex nodded.

“Who’s that over there?” Asked Bex. Anna glanced over at Sandie.

“Head of Operations for the SES,” she said quietly.

“What happened to her?” Asked Bex.
“Swept down the river, ended up caught in a tree. We’ve nearly lost her once already, and she’s too unstable to be moved, so myself and another doctor here are going to do the best we can to help her and get her stabilised.” Bex nodded, and settled back against the pillows on the bed. She realised how cold she was, and Anna handed her a blanket and a spare change of clothes.

“I always bring a spare change with me. I’ll unhook your IV for a few minutes, and then you can get changed. Otherwise, I want you to take it easy,” said Anna. Bex nodded, and took the clothes gratefully.

“Thanks,” she said.

“No worries,” said Anna. She walked over to Sandie’s bed, where the other doctor was working on her.

“How is she?” asked Anna. He grimaced as he glanced up at her.

“She’s had another collapsed lung since you left, and every time I stop the bleeding somewhere, another bleed starts. I can’t understand it,” he said sadly, shaking his head.

“Right. I’m going to talk to the husband for a few minutes. Make sure my other patient returns; if she doesn’t, page me and I’ll go find her.” He nodded, and Anna left, determination across her face as she sought out David Thorne. She found him in under five minutes, Elise still on his side, Edward trailing behind him.

“David. Dave!” she said sternly. He turned to look at her.

“Is Sandie okay?” he asked, searching her eyes.

“Sir, I need to know if your wife was on any medication. Anything at all, no matter how insignificant you think it is.” Dave stood thoughtful for a few moments.

“I know she was on a drug called Warfarin, but I thought she stopped taking that a few weeks ago,” said Dave. Anna swore and sprinted back to the infirmary.

“She’s on Warfarin!” she exclaimed, panting. The doctor dropped his clipboard in shock.

“Are you sure?” he asked in almost a whisper. Anna nodded.

“The husband just said that she had been on it, and was supposed to come off it a few weeks ago, but I don’t think she did. She’s bleeding too easily for that,” breathed Anna.

“Then that’s it.” The doctor stood up, brushing himself down.

“What do you mean ‘that’s it’?” asked Anna.

“There’s nothing I can do now. She’s not going to make it.”

After a few more days, the RES team headed back to Sydney. Head Office demanded they return, and the team weren’t sure how much more they could take. The plane flight back was quiet, the team subdued. In the days after Sandie’s death, they’d had to put up with a ranting, borderline abusive David telling them that they failed in their jobs, and that they could have saved his wife. After two hours of it, Anna fought back, and started yelling at him. She’d received a sharp slap across the face for her remarks, and an hour later, the team were gone. Kieran touched her cheek tenderly.
“Are you okay?” He asked softly. She nodded, carefully touching the bruise on her cheek.

“I understand he lost his wife, and that’s a big thing, but I honestly think he went a little too far,” she said, leaning on Kieran’s shoulder. He kissed the top of her head.

“Don’t worry, we won’t be going back,” said Kieran. Kenzie and Daniel sat across from Anna and Kieran. Kenzie was curled up on the chair, and Daniel had his arm around her.

“It’s been a long week,” commented Kenzie.

“I know. I want to close my eyes, but every time I do, I see some of those people that I just couldn’t save. I’m pretty sure I’m going to be haunted for the rest of my life,” said Daniel, resting his head on Kenzie’s.

“I know. There were so many people out there, and it was near impossible to save them all. We tried though, we really did,” said Kieran. Mark was sitting on the other side of the plane.

“You did try, and I’m proud of every one of you,” said Mark, writing reports.

“Thanks Mark,” said Kenzie. She heard a cheer from the other end of the plane; Liam and Bex were playing cards, and it looked like Liam had won the round.

“They seem to be coping fairly well,” said Daniel.

“They might be now, but Liam didn’t do any rescues, and Bex is being put in for some therapy sessions,” said Mark distractedly.

“What happened out there?” Asked Kenzie.

“She found a body in the house we were checking. I can’t say it was the nicest thing to find, but Bex was pretty shaken by it. We went back and retrieved the body later, and took it up to the morgue,” said Daniel. Kenzie shivered a little.

“I’m glad it wasn’t me. I would have screamed and tried to run away,” said Kenzie.

“She did,” said Daniel simply. Mark dropped his pen on the table, and ran his fingers through his hair.

“You okay?” Asked Kenzie.

“Yeah. I’m going to grab a drink from the minibar; do you all want one?” He asked, standing up. They each nodded, and he returned with drinks. Kenzie accepted her drink, and set it down gently. She could feel herself drifting off to sleep, and fought it off desperately. She knew she’d be back in Sydney soon, and she could have a decent night’s sleep in her own room. Maybe Daniel would join her. She felt the plane begin its descent, and she shook herself awake.

“You okay?” Asked Daniel. She nodded, stretching.

“Just tired,” she answered.

“I know the feeling. I’ve still got to drive back to my apartment,” said Daniel.

“Stay at mine,” Kenzie said softly. He looked into her eyes, and kissed her tenderly.

“Oh, you tell us to get a room, but when it’s you two, it’s all different,” said Anna jestingly. Kenzie blushed furiously.

“Oh come on, she’s just kidding. We’ve had plenty of time spent together, they’ve got to catch up,” joked Kieran. The plane landed, and they all exited the plane, bags in tow.

“Bex, how are you getting back to your apartment?” Asked Mark.

“It’s near a train station, so I’ll be fine. I’ll see you guys on Monday,” said Bex, farewelling them with a quick wave. Liam did the same, heading to the taxi ranks. Anna and Kieran offered to take Mark home, and departed soon after.

“I just have to go to the bathroom,” said Kenzie, leaving her bag with Daniel. She walked off into the bathrooms. After she was finished, she rinsed her hands under the water, and splashed her face with the cool water. She felt a blade catch under her neck, and a pair of hands rip her head back.

“Don’t move.” Kenzie stood still as she possibly could, fear rattling her.

“You rescued my sister from a rip weeks ago. She died a few days later, and I blame you. Now, I’m going to make you pay for this,” said the masculine voice. Kenzie daren’t say a word.

“Good. At least you’re quiet,” he said menacingly. He pulled her out of the bathroom, and tucked the blade back into his backpack. He pulled out a gun and held it into the small of her back.

“Now keep moving, and don’t turn around.” Kenzie gulped and nodded, stepping forward. She hoped Daniel could see her, but assumed he probably couldn’t.

Daniel waited patiently, until an airport employee handed him a note.

“Someone asked me to drop this to you,” she said simply, and then walked away. Daniel opened the note. It was covered in cutout letters, from a magazine.

“Gotta girl. I’m going to make her pay after your team killed my sister. Hope you kissed her goodbye.”
Kenzie was silent as the armed man blindfolded her before shoving her roughly into a van. She was trembling internally, but on the outside, she was calm and stoic.

“Get in,” said the male voice gruffly as he pushed her inside. She tripped up a little, and was hauled into the back. The door slammed, and Kenzie felt her heart speed up a little. She was nervous, afraid of what they’d do to her. She’d heard stories of what had happened to Lara and Michelle when they’d been taken by kidnappers, and how much pain they’d been put through, the therapy, the recovery. She wished that Daniel had seen them, seen her forced to leave with someone, had come after her. She wondered if he even knew she was gone…

Daniel accelerated through the amber light at the intersection, receiving angry glares from drivers, horns honking as he zoomed past. He wanted to get to Mark and Cassie, get their help. He knew Kenzie was in trouble, and it was serious. He was trying to remember which girl they rescued, but his mind just wouldn’t think straight. All he could think about was what would happen to her, what people would do to her. He skidded to a halt outside the RES base, and almost fell out of the patrol. He sprinted up the stairs, hoping that Mark or Cassie were there. He remembered that he probably should have called the police; he could still do that, but he needed guidance from Mark. Mark heard him practically flying up the stairs, and stood up.

“What’s going on?” He asked, noting the stressed look on Daniel’s face. Cassie came out of her office.

“They’ve taken her,” he said breathlessly. His heart was racing as he shoved the letter towards Cass and Mark. They read it together, and then practically tripped over each other splitting off to their separate desks. Mark dialled the police, and Cass called in the rest of the team. She knew they would be tired after their trip away, but she needed them to be back at base and on the ball. Daniel collapsed on the nearest chair, and brushed his damp hair back. He closed his eyes, not ready to have to face the world…

He didn’t realise how long he had been sitting there, but he felt Anna’s hand on his back.

“De Luca, are you okay?” She asked softly?” Daniel shook his head.

“I should have watched, been more observant. It’s my fault. I can’t even remember the girl that we saved that died!” Said Daniel despairingly. Bex brought him over a coffee.

“Drink this. It’s not your fault. Don’t think like that, you’ll end up doubting yourself all the time,” said Bex. She glanced over at Liam and Kieran. They were helping Mark chart up the Sydney area on the whiteboard. A police-woman, Donna, stood with them, pointing out possible trouble areas, and then crossed over to Daniel.

“Mr De Luca, my name is Detective Donna Lee. Can you tell me exactly what happened please?” She enquired. Daniel sighed, and Anna and Bex left to help Cass and Mark.

“We’d just gotten back to the airport, and I was going to head back to Kenzie’s place for the evening. She needed to stop off at the bathroom, and I waited outside for her. A large crowd of people off an incoming flight blocked my view of the bathrooms, and I waited longer. A few
minutes later, one of the airport staffers gave me the note. I came straight here and told Mark and Cass. I didn’t think, I probably should have called you guys first,” said Daniel remorsefully. Donna shrugged her shoulders.

“Doesn’t matter now. Can you remember what the airport worker looked like?” She asked, furiously scribbling notes.

“She had short, red hair, like a ginger colour, a nose piercing, a tattoo on her left arm, looked like some words, and her shoes were more like work boots.” Donna’s brow crinkled, and Daniel looked up at her.

“What? What is it?” He asked.

“She wouldn’t have been an airport worker – no piercings, for one thing. They can set off the metal detectors, and can harbour infection. Two, the tattoos wouldn’t be there either, for obvious gang reasons, and three, I’m pretty much willing to bet that she was wearing a standard uniform either.” She whipped out her phone and then left Daniel alone in his thoughts. Cass crossed the room.

“Come sit in my office,” she said quietly. Daniel nodded, and followed her inside. She closed the door quietly, and sat down on the armchairs, motioning for Daniel to take the other.

“It’s not your fault Daniel,” she said quietly.

“I know,” he replied. She’d been missing for four hours now, and he missed her. He wished he’d been more observant in the airport, maybe even insisted that they just go home.

“You’re beating yourself up,” said Cass, observing him.

“Of course I’d beat myself up. She’s only nineteen Cass, too young to deal with something like this! What are we going to tell her parents if we don’t find her?”

“Don’t think like that Daniel. We’re the best people in the business, and the police are onto it. Mark’s called Vince as well, and he’s pulling in favours for us,” said Cassie sternly.

“I can’t help thinking like that. I don’t even know what I’d do if I lost her,” said Daniel, dropping his head into his hands. Cassie laid a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“We’ll find her Daniel. We will.”

Kenzie felt the van stop, and rough hands pulled her out. She could hear waves in the background, and knew she had to be at a beach. The hands shoved her forward, and she tripped down the stairs she didn’t know were in front of her. She fell awkwardly, her ankle twisting under her. She winced, but didn’t cry out in pain. The blindfold that had been put on before she had to climb into the van was pulled tighter over her eyes. A motor started up, and hands bodily lifted her into a boat, climbing in next to her. She was sandwiched between two large men. The boat took off, and the blindfold was finally lifted off.

“Where are you taking me?” Asked Kenzie as her eyes adjusted. The shoreline was receding quickly as they powered further out into open ocean.

“You’re going to meet the same fate that met my sister. She drowned in this same water, and now, so are you.” The water was frigid; borderline freezing. She trod water for a moment before one of the men dove in next to her. He pushed her under the water, holding her there. She fought back,
holding her breath as long as she could. She kicked out, and caught him in the stomach. He released her, and his friends pulled him back into the boat.

“Leave her. She won’t make it back to shore,” said the first one. The others nodded their agreement.

“No. No, please, don’t leave me!” Said Kenzie. They ignored her and sped away, the boat creating waves in its wake. In moments, they had disappeared.

“No!!” She screamed. A wave washed over her, dumping her underneath the water again. She surfaced, spluttering, and looked around. She started swimming in the direction that the boat had left in, hoping it was the right way. She was already tired, and darkness was falling.

Her only hope was Daniel…

“Anna, pull out the previous files from our rescues. Find one with any females that have died during or after the rescue. Bex, help her out,” ordered Cass. They nodded, and opened the filing cabinet drawers. Pulling out the files, they dropped them on the conference table, and sat down on opposite sides of the table.

“Are we sure we’re even going to find anything?” Asked Bex. Anna shrugged.

“You never really know. Just check through for anything. If you find a file matching Cassie’s description, put it aside, and we’ll go through the entire stack first,” said Anna, pulling the topmost file towards her. Bex did the same.

“This could be a long day,” commented Bex, scanning through the file notes.

“Don’t think like that. This could mean life and death for Kenzie, and we need to find her. This is the only way we can help her,” said Anna. Bex nodded.

“Point taken,” said Bex. Kieran bought over coffee for each of them, and kissed Anna on the forehead. He sat down next to her.

“Any hits yet?” He asked. Anna shook her head. Kieran stretched over her and pulled a file towards himself.

“What are Liam and Daniel doing?” Asked Bex, reading through another file.

“Mark set them to work cleaning out Liam’s chopper, and when they’re finished, he’s got them cleaning ropes and then if they manage to get that finished then he’s going to get them to wash down the patrol,” said Kieran.

“Oh! I’ve got one. We did a water Rescue, the day we were out training with Andy and Dylan. The girl we saved didn’t make it out of the hospital. She died of a secondary drowning the next day, and there was nothing they could do. Her brother went to Special Ops and complained, and they directed him to us. Only problem was, we weren’t actually here; we were out on the hiking trip with Special Ops. He registered his complaint with Head Office, and nothing came of it. Wonder if he’s part of this?” Questioned Anna, poring over the file.

“Keep looking. We want to make sure that we’ve covered all bases,” said Kieran, pulling over another file.

“What happens if we don’t find her?” Asked Bex. She looked up to find Anna and Kieran staring
at her.

“What?” She asked, confused. Anna peeked at Kieran and then back at Bex.

“We will find her. No question about it.”

Kenzie tried treading water for a while, but tired quickly. She returned to swimming, hoping she was making some progress towards the shoreline. Every muscle in her body screamed in pain as she pushed through her exhaustion, her lungs shrieking for more oxygen. She kept dipping under the waves, each time going under for a longer period of time. She knew she was in trouble; serious trouble. As she surfaced again, she spotted the beach, a lifeguard tower in her sights. She struck out, headed for the tower. She ducked under the water again, and came up spluttering. She had no idea how much water she’d swallowed so far, but knew it couldn’t be good. The next time she came up, she saw the lifeguards on duty, pacing the beach, patrolling the flags. She continued swimming, muscles burning. She wouldn’t make it to the beach. Not without help anyway. She raised her hand before a wave dunked her again.

This time though, she didn’t have the strength to come back up…

Darkness prevailed…

Kerrbox saw the girl first. He was lucky they were out today training. It was bordering on winter, and they’d decided to take the jet-ski out. Maxi was due for more training, and Hoppo was itching to take him out. He paced the beach, waiting for them to get the jet-ski out and down to the water. Reidy was being annoying as usual, trying to psych out Maxi before he got on the ski. Kerrbox kept a watchful eye on his team as glanced out over the water to see a flailing hand, and then a girl.

“Reidy, grab the board! Hoppo, get off the ski. Maxi, grab the defib and oxygen from the tower.” The Bondi boys split as Kerrbox roared into the surface. He kept his eyes to exactly where he’d last seen the girl. Hoppo was riding on the board behind Kerrbox, and as they neared the spot where Kerrbox had last seen her, Hoppo slid off the board into the water.

“What am I looking for Kerr?” He asked.

“I saw a girl around here, arms flailing. Find her!” Ordered Kerrbox. Hoppo dropped under the water, and found the girl sinking slowly. He dove deep, and grabbed her arm. He pulled her up just as Reidy caught up to them without the board.

“Where’s the board?” Asked Kerrbox.

“Couldn’t get them out from the storage locker. We’ve only got the jet-ski,” replied Reidy. Hoppo surfaced with the girl, her head falling back, not breathing.

“Hold her on,” said Kerrbox, before accelerating through the pounding waves to get back to shore. Reidy and Hoppo held on tight to the girl as they sped back to shore. Whippet and Deano had joined Maxi on the beach, and they splashed out to the jet ski to help Hoppo and Reidy carry the girl up the beach. She was wearing a Rescue Elite Squad uniform.

“Call Elite. Tell them we’ve found one of theirs.” Hoppo left them, sprinting to the tower to call Elite. Maxi peeled back her sodden uniform, Reidy covering her in towels. Deano started CPR on the girl.

“Come on! Breathe!”
Daniel sat in the office alone, thoughts and feelings in utter turmoil. Cass had gone out to grab lunch for the team, and Mark was in a team meeting with the others. Daniel had opted out, preferring some time to dwell on his thoughts. He was interrupted when Cass’s desk phone rang, and he answered it.

“What’s up?” He said into the receiver dully.

“This is Bruce Hopkins from the Waverly Council Bondi Lifeguard Tower. We have one of your employees here; she was pulled from the surf about two minutes ago,” he said breathlessly. Daniel inhaled sharply.

“I’ll be there in a few minutes,” said Daniel, before dropping the phone. He ran down the stairs.

“Daniel, where are you going?” Asked Bex as he blew past.

“They found Kenz, she’s down at Bondi,” said Daniel, jumping into the driver’s seat of the first patrol he came to. He felt down his pockets for the keys, and swore at himself for not picking them up. A small hand passed him a set, and he glanced to his side to see Bex.

“What are you doing?” He asked.

“You’re not going by yourself; besides, Mark wanted me to come.” Daniel nodded, and floored the patrol out, swerving as he took the corner. Bex held on tightly as he sped towards Bondi, his thoughts anchored on getting to Kenzie. Bex flipped on the lights and sirens, enabling him to drive through the traffic with a little more ease. He pulled up to Bondi, and tried to get out of the patrol without releasing his seatbelt. Bex hit the release, and then climbed out after him, making sure the patrol was locked and secure. Daniel ran down the beach, the lifeguards still grouped around her, sirens indicating that an ambulance arrival was imminent. Daniel skidded to a halt, spraying sand everywhere, and dropped down next to Kenzie. He smoothed back her sodden hair. Deano moved aside to make room for Daniel, and he squeezed Kenzie’s hand. An oxygen mask obscured her face, but she was alive. Still breathing, but the lifeguards wanted to make sure that she wasn’t at risk of a secondary drowning, and the bruises around her neck and shoulders where the men had tried to force her underwater were of some concern. Bex finally caught up to Daniel, smiling as she realised Kenzie was okay.

“What happened?” Asked Kerrbox.

“She was taken by some guy earlier today, and we had no idea where to look for her. He left us a note telling us it was revenge for the death of his sister, and that he hoped we’d said goodbye. How did you guys find her?” Asked Bex.

“We were going out to do some training. We don’t tend to work in winter; it’s usually too cold for swimmers, and it’s usually only experienced surfers out here in the winter months. We were getting the jet-ski ready when Kerrbox spotted your girl here, and we headed straight out. She looked exhausted, and I think she’s probably taken in a lot of water,” Said Reidy. The ambo’s came sprinting down the beach, bags flapping against their sides as the came down to where Kenzie and Daniel were. Kenzie was over the fuss already, but didn’t have the energy to get up and ask them to leave. Instead, she put up with their fretting; glad Daniel was there with her. She gripped his hand as they transferred her onto a stretcher.

“You can go with her De Luca. I can swing by and pick you up later,” said Bex. He nodded, and walked up to the ambulance with Bex. Her phone rang, and she dug it out of her pocket. The lifeguards let her be, returning to their training session.
“Hello?” She answered.

“Bex, it’s Cass. Don’t leave the beach. We’ve had a report of a boating accident somewhere near you. Can you get the Waverly Council Lifeguards to take you guys out?” Asked Cass.

“Well, it’s just me. Daniel’s gone to the hospital with Kenzie. They’re worried she’s taken in a lot of water, and they needed to check her out,” replied Bex. Maxi was still standing next to her. He wasn’t going out for the training just yet, but he was open to helping a pretty girl like Bex.

“Okay. Have you got any of the Bondi Boys that could help you? Liam and Anna are taking the chopper up, and Kieran is going with them. If Daniel and Kenzie are out, I’m a little short on the team,” said Cassie, almost desperately. Bex glanced at Maxi, who nodded. He’d been listening to the conversation; Cassie was loud enough on the phone for Kerrbox and the others to hear her out in the ocean where they were paddling.

“Yeah. We’ll be fine Cassie. Message me the details, and we’ll do what we can,” replied Bex. Cassie hung up, and thirty seconds later, Mark sent her a message with the details.

“Are you guys sure you’re okay to help us?” Asked Bex, walking up to the storage shed. Maxi nodded.

“Yeah. We should be fine. It’s only training, and it’s booked for extra days in case the surf was too high for us, or if the weather was bad.” Bex flashed a smile at him.

“Thanks for helping us then,” she answered. He swung himself into the driver’s seat of the dune buggy, which was hooked up to the trailer holding the speedboat. Bex slid into the passenger seat, and Maxi floored it out, before turning it around and backing it down to the water. Kerrbox, Deano, Hoppo and Reidy returned to shore.

“Maxi, what are you doing?” Asked Kerrbox, Reidy helping him drag the jet-ski back to shore.

“Elite has had a call out to here, with someone reporting a boating accident near here. Our unit is running a little on the thin side with our team leader Kenzie being put in hospital after nearly drowning, and our assistant team leader going with her. Cassandra has asked if you guys would be able to help, and Maxi here agreed.” Maxi flushed a furious red colour, knowing that this would score him weeks of being ribbed by the rest of the boys. Kerrbox glanced at the three others, and they nodded in eerie unison.

“Alright, we can help,” he responded grudgingly. They pushed the jet-ski back into the water, and Maxi revved the engine of the boat before speeding out. Bex sat next to him, and heard the helicopter as it flew overhead.

“That’s the rest of our team,” she informed Maxi. As she spoke, the tail motor caught on fire, and the helicopter crashed into the ocean. She stood up in the rubber boat, not caring if they capsized.

“NO!” Maxi accelerated, the jet-ski mirroring their movements as they sped towards to the accident scene. Hoppo pulled Bex down into the dingy.

“You won’t be able to swim in that uniform. Let us handle it,” said Hoppo gently. Bex nodded, and
watched the water…

Hoping they were okay…

Twenty Minutes Earlier…

“We’ve got a callout!” Cassie called down the stairs. Anna, Liam and Kieran glanced up the stairs, and then raced each other up the stairs. Liam made it up first.

“What’s the job?” He asked.

“A boating accident near Bondi Beach. We need the chopper up and out there. Liam, Anna, you two good to go?” Asked Cassie.

“You need three of us up there,” replied Liam.

“Why?” Asked Cassie, pulling out the paperwork that would have to be started while they were gone.

“Because if someone has to drop down, we need someone else in the chopper other than the pilot.” Cassie sighed, remembering as he spoke.

“Okay. All three of you go, I’ll call Bex, see what we can do. Maybe the Waverly Council Lifeguards will be able to lend us a hand today; I can’t see De Luca leaving Kenzie’s side to come back to help. Go on, go,” said Cassie. They didn’t need to be told twice. Liam led the way up to the roof where his beloved chopper was parked, and climbed into the main pilot’s chair. He began pre-flight checks as Anna and Kieran loaded the medi-kits on board, and checked the rest of the gear before climbing in themselves.

“You guys okay to go?” Asked Liam. Anna adjusted her head set, and glanced at Kieran. He flashed a grin.

“Yeah Liam, we’re good to go,” replied Anna.

“Let’s go find us some boaters,” said Liam, taking off. Anna held on as the helicopter lifted higher.

“Liam, is it always like this?” Asked Anna.

“Not usually, but it’ll be fine,” said Liam, steering the craft towards Bondi Beach. Kieran glanced at Liam. He turned back to them as the entire control panel lit up.

“Guys, put on your lifejack-“ Liam was cut off the helicopter caught fire.

“Jump!” He yelled, trying to steer the falling machine. Anna and Kieran jumped, not realising how far away the water really was. Kieran hit the water first, the impact knocking him unconscious. Anna fell into the water next as the helicopter exploded. She gasped as the frigid water hit her. As the water swirled around her she pulled the ripcord on her lifejacket, and was buoyed straight to the surface. A man she didn’t recognise pulled her away from the wreckage.

“No, Kieran, please!” She cried, struggling against him.

“Reidy will get him. We need to look at your head injury,” said the male. Anna continued fighting as Deano dragged her back to Bex in the boat. Bex and Hoppo helped her up.

“No, you’ve got to go back for Kieran, please!” Said Anna desperately.
“Anna, Maxi’s diving their now, and Deano’s going to help him. Calm down for two seconds,” said Bex, applying pressure to Anna’s head wound. Reidy found Liam’s body, burns covering his left arm. He’d only just made it outside of the cabin before the helicopter had gone up in flames, shards of the reinforced glass embedded in his arm and face. Reidy grabbed him carefully, keeping his head above the water before dragging him back to Bex.

“Oh God, Liam,” said Anna, holding the gauze pad to her head. Hoppo pulled him up into the boat.

“He’s breathing,” said Hoppo, checking him over. Bex nodded; they’d treat him on shore. For now, they had to find Kieran. Anna sat, huddled on tiny boat, shivering as the breeze hit her damp body. She hoped they’d find Kieran. She saw him hit the water, but didn’t see him inflate his lifejacket. She wasn’t even sure if he was wearing one. Maxi dove again, Deano and Reidy with him. Kerrbox watched them, almost praying that they’d find the guy they were looking for. The air was tense, suspenseful, as they watched and waited. Deano surfaced, empty handed.

“He’s gone too deep. We need scuba gear,” said Deano, breathless. Kerrbox helped him up onto the jet-ski. Reidy appeared next.

“Maxi’s still down there,” he said, spitting out a mouthful of water.

“Why isn’t he coming up?” Said Kerrbox angrily.

“Seems to think he can find Kieran on his own. I don’t know Kerr, honestly,” said Reidy. It was bordering on hopeless, until Kieran’s limp body surfaced.

“KIERAN!” Screamed Anna, standing up in the boat. Reidy swam over to Kieran and dragged him back to Bex and Anna.

“Go, take him back to shore. Take Deano with you; Box and I will deal with Maxi,” said Reidy. Hoppo nodded, and they sped towards the shore, Bex working madly on Kieran, forcing the water out of his battered and bruised body.

“Come on Kieran, not now. Not like this,” said Bex furiously. Anna was in tears as Deano helped Bex. Hoppo radioed back to the tower where Troy and Jesse were; they would meet them at the shore line with the defibrillator. Reidy watched as the boat disappeared, and then Maxi’s body surfaced. Reidy rolled Maxi’s body over.

“Box,” said Reidy warningly. Maxi coughed a little, and tried to suck in a lungful of air. Reidy held his head above the water as Box helped him up onto the board on the back of the jet-ski. Maxi felt wiped, but knew he’d done a good job.

“Is he okay?” He rasped.

“Is who okay?” Reidy asked.


“I don’t know mate, but whatever’s gone down with Elite and the guy that’s chasing them is pretty serious.” Maxi nodded, relaxing against the board, before Kerrbox beached the jet-ski. Troy helped Maxi up, and they watched as Kieran’s body struggled to stay alive. Anna was distraught.

“Kieran, don’t leave me!” Kieran gave a feeble cough, and rolled over, water flooding out of his mouth. Anna sighed with relief, tears streaming down her face. Maxi leant heavily on Troy, exhausted, his lungs aching. Bex kissed him on the cheek.
“Thank you Maxi.” He blushed a little before Troy led him away to the lifeguard tower, Mouse coming down to help him. An ambulance screamed to a halt in the carpark near the beach, and Mark swerved in behind them, literally catapulting himself out of his patrol down to the beach. Liam was shaking, blood seeping through the towel that Hoppo had wrapped around his arm; they hadn’t wanted to remove any of the glass without medical supervision, and they wanted all three of them to be checked over.

“What happened?” Asked Mark of Bex as Kieran, Anna and Liam were taken away by the concerned officers. Bex shrugged her shoulders, watching the rest of the team being carried away.

“The helicopter just exploded. I don’t know what really happened; only the three of them know,” replied Bex. She was just glad they were all okay.

“Are you right to make your way back to base? You have a mountain of paperwork waiting with Cassie, for today’s reports,” said Mark. She nodded, and made her way up the sand to the carpark, climbing into Daniel’s patrol. Mark turned to the lifeguards left on the beach.

“Thank you so much for being able to help today. It’s been a little crazy at Elite, and we really appreciate you taking the time out to help,” said Mark, shaking Kerrbox’s hand. Troy appeared outside the tower where they were now congregated.

“Box, we could use you inside; Maxi’s just collapsed.” Mark waved them away, and headed back to his patrol. His phone rang, and he answered it, sitting comfortably in the drivers seat.

“Mark Ramirez speaking.”

“Mark, it’s Cass. How are things going down there?” She asked. He looked down at his knees before leaning back in his seat.

“You might want to ask Head Office for a bigger budget, or take out a loan on our team,” said Mark drily.

“What happened?” She asked sternly.

“Oh, just an exploded helicopter to make our day worse.” Cassie gasped, sitting down at her desk.

“Is everyone okay?” She asked.

“I’m about to head over to RPA now, see what’s going on. I might find out if Vince can use some of his contacts to speed things up a little if they can. Bex is on her way back to you; ask her what happened. I’m not really sure myself.” Cassie heard the garage door open.

“She’s back now; keep me posted on the others, and send De Luca back if you can,” said Cassie.

“Will do. Catch you later.” Mark and Cassie hung up simultaneously. Cass stepped out of her office to see Bex walk up the stairs and sit at her desk.

“What happened out there today?” Asked Cassie, taking Liam’s seat next to Bex’s desk.

“We got Kenzie out fine, she went to the hospital with Daniel. You rang, asked if the Bondi Boys could help out with a boat rescue. There was no boat Cassie. Nothing. The helicopter flew over our rescue dinghy before just exploding.” Cass laid a reassuring hand on Bex’s arm.

“What happened next?” She asked softly.
“Some of the lifeguards with us jumped in. Anna was pulled out first; she had a serious head laceration. I think it will probably need stitches. Liam was pulled into our boat next. He had shards of glass in his left arm, and some serious burns. I don’t think he got out quick enough before the helicopter shattered.” Bex took a deep breath, steadying herself.

“We thought we’d lost Kieran though. He’d been knocked unconscious when he hit the water, and just sank. Maxi nearly killed himself diving down to save him. I don’t know what Anna would have done if we didn’t get him back. Hoppo got us back to the shore, and we revived Kieran. Next thing I know, Mark’s standing next to me demanding to know what happened.” Cassie heard heavy breathing from the staircase. She’d been distracted listening to Bex.

“Did you lock the front door?” Whispered Cass. Bex shook her head.

“I completely forgot.” The breathing became heavier as the body appeared at the top of the stairs.

“I’ve been waiting for this chance. You killed my sister; now I’m going to kill you.”

********

Mark stepped inside the hospital. Anna met him at the door.

“How are you feeling?” He asked, examining the laceration on her forehead.

“I’m a little dizzy, but it’ll pass. I’m fine to leave.” Mark nodded.

“Do you know where the others are?” He asked.

“Kieran’s been taken up to X-Ray. They think he’s broken some ribs, and they want to check. Liam’s getting stitches put in, and Kenzie was upstairs in the general ward. She’s alright, but they want to keep her overnight for observation. Same with Kieran. They think Liam will be able to go home tonight though, as long as he stays with company.” Mark nodded.

“Andy’s already asked for that job. He’ll be heading back to hers tonight.” Anna smiled as they walked up to Kenzie’s room. Daniel was asleep, his head resting on the bed, Kenzie stroking his hair gently.

“Hey Kenzie. How are you feeling?” He asked.

“Exhausted, but happy to be alive. The bruising will go away, they’re just concerned about the fact I drowned. They want to keep me overnight; Daniel wants me home so he knows I’m safe. He spent at least an hour and a half arguing with them over it.” Mark smiled a little.

“That sounds like De Luca. I’ll see what I can do; he hasn’t slept since you were taken from the airport. It would probably do him good to have you where he can see you.” Mark left the room, and Kenzie glanced at Anna.

“Are you okay?” She asked. Anna nodded.

“Yeah, I just feel like I’ve been through the ringer. The helicopter exploded today, right over the water at Bondi.”

“Is everyone okay?” Asked Kenzie.

“We’ll be fine. We were more concerned about getting you back.” Mark appeared in the room again, and shook Daniel. Hard.
“De Luca, get up.” Daniel shook his head groggily.

“What?” He slurred.

“I just got a message from Cass. Help. I want you to come back with me and check it out. Anna, stay here, ring the police and send them over to base. Got it?” Anna nodded. Mark and Daniel charged out of the room. Anna pulled out her mobile, and dialled triple-0.

“I wonder what’s going on?”

Daniel and Mark climbed into the patrol parked haphazardly outside the hospital, buckling themselves in. Mark threw the patrol into gear, and floored the accelerator, skidding out of the carpark.

“What do you think happened?” Asked Daniel, holding onto the seat of the patrol as Mark swerved around cars in the seemingly standstill traffic.

“I don’t know, but I’m not going to wait to find out,” he said distractedly, flipping on the sirens and lights. He pulled up in front of headquarters, and stopped. Something didn’t feel right; it was unusually quiet, the air thick with tension. He opened up the front door quietly, holding a finger to his lips. Daniel was silent, walking inside the door. A drop of blood hit the floor in front of him, and he stepped backwards. Mark looked up to see a figure hanging over the stairs, an extension lead wrapped firmly around his neck, eyes wide open and unseeing. Mark and Daniel stepped back against the wall before making their way upstairs.

“Cassie?” Called Mark quietly. He was hoping that the male hanging from the staircase was the only problem. He made it to the top of the stairs and glanced around the office. It was evident there had been some sort of a struggle; office chairs were overturned, paperwork scattered on the floor, blood spatters everywhere.

“Cassie?” Said Daniel, confident there was no-one else there. Mark looked around and opened Cassandra’s office door.

“Daniel, in here,” he said quickly. Mark rushed inside, Daniel following him. Cassie was curled up in the corner, her hands and feet tied, carpet burns covering the tops of her arms and her chest. She was gagged, and appeared like she was unconscious.

“Pass me the scissors,” said Mark, motioning to Cass’s desk. Daniel opened the top drawer and pulled out the pair of scissors, passing them to Mark. He cut the ties around her feet and hands, and pulled off the gag. She stirred, wincing a little. Mark tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

“Are you okay?” He asked gently. She nodded, and Mark and Daniel helped her up into a chair.

“He’s the guy who took Kenzie. His sister was the one that nearly drowned the day you took everyone out training. She died in hospital that afternoon, and he’s had a vendetta against us ever since. He’s been planning this moment ever since his sister’s funeral.” Cassie could feel hot tears threatening to spill, and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. Mark held her hand comforting.

“He hit me, blaming me for everything. He locked the doors, trapping us up here. He hit me once, and then dragged me into my office. I tried to fight, I did, I just couldn’t do it. He bound and gagged me, and pushed me into the corner, and then he went after Bex.” She stopped, lifting a hand to her mouth.
“Where’s Bex?” She whispered. Daniel shrugged as he glanced at Mark.

“She was screaming so loudly. I’ve never heard anyone more frightened. I don’t know what he did to her, but I haven’t heard from her since,” said Cassie, worried. Mark looked at Daniel, and he left the office.

“Bex?” He called. He straightened up some of the desks, gathering the paperwork and setting it on one of the desks. He glanced underneath some of the desks, and then he heard a noise.

“Bex?” He said yet again. The noise came again, a smashing sound, like someone head-butting metal. Daniel glanced around, and then spotted the large metal cupboard; Cassie usually used it for storing cleaning supplies and such. He ran over to it and flung the doors open. Bex was trapped inside, bottles of bleach tipped over and upset on the floor, everything still shoved around her, her hands bound the same way as Cassie’s, her mouth gagged. Her frightened eyes locked with Daniel’s, and he pulled everything out before he carefully lifted her out.

“Mark!” He called, setting her down on a chair. Mark left Cassie in the office and came out to where Daniel was standing. He pulled a pair of scissors out of the nearest desk and cut the ties that were keeping her bound. She wrapped her arms around Daniel, holding him tight, and sobbed into his neck. She was shaking with fear, her uniform ripped, hair messed, clothes bleached, a bruise forming on the side of her head where she’d been struck before being shoved in the closet. Mark set to cleaning up the bleach as the police arrived. They started taking Cassie’s statement, and the coroner’s department removed the man’s body from the side of the staircase. Daniel continued to hold Bex, and she eventually stopped crying, the sobs subsiding into hiccups. She pushed away from Daniel.

“What’s wrong?” He asked. She held a hand to her chest.

“Feels tight,” she rasped. Daniel felt her pulse, and his brow furrowed.

“Your pulse is a little slow,” he said, almost distractedly. Mark had already thought about it as he cleaned up, and came over with an oxygen mask and tank, and slipped the mask over Bex’s head.

“Bleach fumes. She’ll need to be checked up; might as well send her to the hospital. This nutjob already sent the rest of my team there,” said Mark, resuming the cleaning. Daniel nodded to her, and headed for the stairs, Bex still holding onto him. He put her in the passenger seat carefully, and belted her in. The fear returned in her eyes when she thought Daniel was going to leave her.

“I’m just going to the driver’s side, okay?” She nodded, relaxing a little as Daniel crossed around the front of the patrol. He climbed in next to her, and started the engine.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” He asked. She refused to look at him, but nodded her head. He laid a gentle hand on her and she flinched. He felt it, and pulled the car over, stopping.

“What happened?” He questioned gently.

“Please Daniel, I don’t want to talk about it,” she said quietly.

“I know you don’t Rebecca, but it’s either me or the police. I can hold them off if need be, but I need to know what happened, otherwise they’re going to harass you,” said Daniel. Bex brought her knees up to her chest, and looked at her feet.

“He tried so hard Daniel. I don’t know if he did it or not, but he wanted me Daniel, he wanted me so badly. I reminded him of his sister, and he wanted me to die.” She started shaking again as she relieved the memory, tears streaming down her face.
“He tried to rape me Daniel, and I don’t know if he succeeded. I’ve never been so scared in my life, and I screamed, trying to get him to stop, and he just gagged me. I don’t remember what else he did,” she said shakily. He laid a hand on hers, and she pulled it away.

“Don’t touch me.” Daniel sat back in his seat, and ran his fingers through his hair. Bex pressed herself against the door.

“Why was it me?” She yelled, hands pressed against the door, looking like a trapped animal. Daniel didn’t know what to do.

“Bec, I’m sorry, I don’t know what you want me to say,” Daniel said softly. She sobbed harder. Daniel held his arms out and wrapped them around Bex, comforting her. After a while she withdrew from him, and pulled her seatbelt back on. She stared out the window, and after a few moments, Daniel put the patrol into gear, and headed for RPA hospital. He stopped in the carpark, and helped her out of the car. She wasn’t able to stand on her own, and Daniel carried her inside. A nurse met him at the entrance to Emergency, and took both of them through a corridor to a private examination room.

“A doctor will be with you shortly,” she said, closing the door. Daniel set her down on the bed, and dragged the sheet over her. She rolled over to face the wall.

“Do you want me to stay?” He asked. She shook her head, not looking at him. He glanced down at the floor, and then left. He headed up to Kenzie’s room, wanting to be comforted himself. Anna was still in the room, her own discharge papers held in her hand. Kenzie had hers as well.

“Is everything okay?” Asked Kenzie. He shook his head.

“Not really,” he said dully. Kenzie crossed over to him, and wrapped her arms around him. He leant down and kissed her, and then held her tight.

“They got the guy. He hung himself in our headquarters,” said Daniel quietly. Kenzie buried her head in his chest.

“How are Cassie and Bex?” Asked Anna, trying to steer the topic of conversation away from the man that had tried to kill all of them. Daniel sighed.

“Cassie is okay, a little shaken up, but she was okay when I left. Bex is a mess though,” said Daniel.


“I can’t tell you, that’s up to Bex,” said Daniel. He motioned for Anna to follow him, and he led Kenzie out of the hospital.

“Where are we going?” Asked Kenzie.

“Going home. These past three days have been nothing but dangerous situations for us all, and I want to go home. The next few weeks are going to be hard on us all,” said Daniel. Anna nodded in agreement, and so did Kenzie.

“Sounds like a plan. Anna, want to come over for dinner?”

Bex was released a few hours later, and she chose to walk home alone. She wished her brother was still around; he was killed in a car accident a few years previously, but as the older brother, he
would have been the one to comfort her, tell her it would be okay. She unlocked the door of her
apartment, and entered the cold, dark room. The hair on the back of her neck raised up, and she felt
unnerved, almost afraid. She wished she had someone to come home to, someone to tell her it
would be okay…

She didn’t know if it would ever be okay…
Bex flung herself inside the house, slamming the door. She leant against it, sobbing hard, unable to
catch her breath. She’d tried to go outside for a run, but felt like eyes were watching her, people
judging her, somehow knowing she was tainted. She pulled her knees close to her chest, wanting to
fade away into the door, wishing that she wasn’t there, that last week had never happened.

When did life get so complicated…?

It had been a week since everything had happened with the crazed man that had tried to take out
the Elite team, and their office still smelt faintly like bleach. Mark leant back in his chair, counting
the heads in the office. He got to five before he stopped.

“Anyone know where Bex is?” Daniel shook his head. He’d tried calling her, making sure she was
okay, but she wasn’t answering her phone. He knew something was up, but wasn’t quite sure what.
His gut instinct told him it was bad, but he couldn’t interfere; not unless she asked.

“Well, for the fifth time this week, she’s late. Seems to be a habit she’s developing.” commented
Mark. Kenzie glanced over her computer at Daniel. She knew he was concerned, and was touched
by that, but she didn’t want it to become a permanent thing. She was the jealous type, the sort that
would fight for her man if it even looked like someone might steal him away. At this moment in
time, Bex seemed like the perfect candidate to do so. Kieran and Anna walked up the stairs, Anna
throwing a dirty cloth at Mark.

“Patrols are spotless. Inside and out. We’re not doing ropes,” said Anna wearily, taking her seat at
her desk. Liam jumped up quickly.

“I’ve, um, just remembered that I’ve got to do a maintenance check of the chopper.” He dashed
away, and Mark smiled.

“Kenz, De Luca. You know what you’ve got to do. Ropes, harnesses, and check the BA’s too
while you’re at it.” Kenzie sighed, logging off her computer, and followed Daniel downstairs.
They worked in silence for a little while, until Kenzie broke it.

“What happened between you and Bex?” She asked, dipping her sponge into the warm, soapy
water.

“What do you mean?” Asked Daniel, a little confused.

“Something’s happened. She’s not here, you know something. What is it?” She asked, prying.

“I told you at the hospital that I couldn’t tell you Kenz. I thought you’d respect that,” said Daniel
warily.

“Yes, but I’m team leader, so I sort of need to know.” Daniel threw his sponge down on the floor.

“You don’t need to know this Kenz. It’s private, personal information that Bex needs to tell you
herself. Not me. And there is nothing going on between us, okay?” Kenzie recoiled a little, but was
determined to find out what happened.

"Episode 8: It Gets Better..."
“Dan, you have to tell me at some point.” Daniel glared at her, and stormed upstairs. He grabbed his keys and his wallet. Mark glanced at him.

“Where are you going?” He asked quietly.

“Out. I’ll be back to finish the ropes later.” Mark didn’t even question Daniel, knowing if he waited about five minutes, he would hear the other side of the conversation from Kenzie. Not two minutes after Daniel had gone, Kenzie came storming up the stairs.

“Ugh, why are men so temperamental?” She fumed. Lucky for Mark, Cassie happened to be in the office as well.

“What happened?” She asked.

“I wanted to know what had gone on between Daniel and Bex, for him to confess to me that something had gone on, but he keeps telling me nothing has! I know he’s lying, he has to be. He’s way too concerned about her.” Mark glanced at Cassie, and shook his head. From what Cassie had told him and the police report he’d read, he had a fair idea of what happened, but didn’t want to tell the rest of the team straight away. He wanted Bex to be able to tell them in her own time.

“Did you ever think that maybe there’s a good reason why he’s not telling you anything?” Questioned Cassie.

“Oh, you’re like Daniel. It’s private, personal. I just want to know she’s okay!” Cassie felt it time to end the conversation.

“Bex is fine, now drop it, and do the work Mark has ordered!”

Daniel didn’t go far before cruising to the side of the road, and killing the engine. He hated leaving in a huff like that, but Kenzie had made him so angry, so overwhelmed. He wanted to be able to tell her what was going on, but knew it was Bex’s call to make, not his. He rested his head on the steering wheel for a moment, stress winding him up. He’d felt on edge for the past week, always checking over his shoulder. His phone vibrated in his pocket, and he pulled it out, opening the message.

_I’m sorry. Come back, please._ Daniel ignored her message. He needed some time to breathe, to re-centre himself before he returned. He’d known this point would come; she’d held off asking questions, only lasting five days before curiosity won out. Then the interrogation had started. Daniel cursed himself for not thinking of avoiding her sooner. His concern for Bex was more like a big brother showing concern, than what Kenzie was seeing it as; him cheating on her with Bex. He sighed, wishing he could explain everything. His phone vibrated again, and he was going to ignore it, until he saw Bex’s name flash urgently across the lit screen.

_I need to talk. Are you available?_ Daniel didn’t hesitate in replying, fingers flying across the keypad.

_On my way…_

“Hello? Bex, are you there?” Daniel knocked on the door for the sixth time, and still no answer. After a few more moments, he left her doorstep, composing a message as he walked.

_I’m here, where are you?_ He returned to the patrol, not wanting to return just yet. Something told him that she wasn’t right, that something was going on for him. The only problem was, he wasn’t
Kenzie worked on the ropes by herself. Anna and Kieran had been given a reprieve, and Liam was actually cleaning and doing maintenance on the chopper. She was fuming inside. She wanted to know what was going on, to be a part of the secret that seemed to be circulating the team. Mark appeared downstairs.

“You’ve got a callout. Daniel’s not going with you, the four of you can manage. Okay?” Kenzie threw her sponge into the bucket angrily.

“Can’t you tell…” Mark shook his head.

“No Kenzie. And don’t even bother asking again. Now move!” Liam, Anna and Kieran came sprinting down the stairs. Kieran took the driver’s seat, Anna next to him, and Liam and Kenzie in the back.

“What have we got?” Asked Kenzie. Kieran flipped on the sirens as Anna twisted in her seat.

“Woman hanging off the side of a building, her kid fell out the window. He’s two stories down from her, and we’ve got to get them both off the building and checked over. We’ve got the ropes and harnesses packed, and the ambulance crews will meet us there.” Kenzie didn’t say a word, just leant back in her seat, arms crossed.

“You can’t stay mad at him forever Kenz,” said Anna, turning in her seat to face the front.

“And why not? He won’t tell me what’s going on! What happens if he’s cheating on me?”

“You’ve got to trust him Kenz. You know that. How does he know that you’re not cheating on him?” Asked Liam, frustrated. He was already tired of their arguing, and just wanted them to either break up or make up.

“But I’m not cheating on him!” Exclaimed Kenzie, almost outraged.

“But how does he know that?” Asked Anna. Their discussion was cut short when they pulled up in front of the building, where a woman dangled precariously. Her four year old child was sitting on a ledge below her, screaming his tiny lungs out. He looked confused, terrified.

“What’s your plan of action?” Asked Anna, stepping out of the vehicle.

“Two teams; Anna and Kieran, take the woman. Liam and I will go for the boy,” said Kenzie, eyeing off the height. If anything was going to get her mind off Daniel and Bex, scaling a tall building and doing a rescue was the best way she knew how.

“Come on, let’s get up there,” said Kenzie, waving her team into action. They sprinted for the stairs, ropes and harnesses flapping against their legs. The stairs took moments to clear, and they found themselves perched on the roof. Kieran and Kenzie harnessed up as Anna and Liam secured the lines.

“Aren’t we ready?” Asked Kenzie, checking her ropes for the fourth time. The team nodded in unison, and Kieran and Kenzie launched themselves over the edge. Kenzie felt all her troubles melt away as she abseiled down the side of the building. She reached the screaming four year old, and harnessed him up carefully. He protested the entire way down the building, where she handed him
over to paramedics and police. Kieran was a little slower, the mother screaming more than the four year old. Kieran finally got her down, and police led her away.

“What’s the deal with that?” Asked Kieran, unstrapping his harness.

“She tried to kill the kid. Threw him out the window, and then her husband pushed her out. He was the one who called it in. He and his wife are being charged with attempted murder, and their son and other daughter will be taken into emergency foster care,” said Kenzie, coiling her rope up carefully.

“She really didn’t like her kid that much?” Asked Anna, incredulous. Kenzie shrugged her shoulders.

“Police said they’d notify us of what’s happening,” said Kenzie. Her phone vibrated in her pocket, and she pulled it out. Her heart leapt for joy when she found a message from Daniel, and then dropped as she read the text.

Get to Rebecca’s house now. Ring 000 on the way

Daniel waited outside Bex’s house for another hour. He heard the call from Mark about a rescue, and messaged back, telling him that he wouldn’t make it. He knew something was up with Bex, he just wished he could put his finger on it. He decided to make a final tour up to her front door, hoping that his gut was wrong. He knocked again, fingers crossed, hoping, praying he was wrong. He knocked, and her door opened, creaking a little. Daniel’s hackles were raised, and he pulled out his phone. He had limited reception, and wasn’t going to be able to call anyone clearly. He switched to the messaging function, and started typing.

“Bex?” he called warily. There was no response, but he heard something fall in the bedroom. He changed directions, aiming straight for the bedroom door. He flung it open, and what he found there scared the hell out of him…

Scared the hell out of everyone…

Bex pressed herself into the corner of her room, holding her head, the still bleeding cuts visible on her arms. Daniel pushed open her door carefully as Bex started sobbing uncontrollably.

“Bex, what did you do?” Asked Daniel, crossing over to her.

“Don’t touch me,” she snapped, pressing herself against the wall. Daniel backed away, noting the dark bruise starting to appear on the side of her face. He noticed the razor blades on the dresser, and moved them aside.

“Bex, what’s going on?” He asked gently.

“I can’t do this anymore; I’m afraid of everything! Ever since that guy trapped me in the closet, since he did those things to me, I can’t even walk outside my door. I’m so scared Daniel, and I can’t… take… it!” She broke down sobbing again as Daniel heard a knock on the door. He grabbed a nearby towel and pressed it into the straight wounds on her arms, and she flinched as he touched her.

“Don’t go anywhere,” he said, noting the blood that now stained the carpet and his hands. He walked to the front door of her apartment, and pulled back the door carefully. Anna, Liam, Kieran and Kenzie stood waiting in the doorway.

“Anna, with me. The rest of you wait for the ambulance,” ordered Daniel.

“But…” started Kenzie.

“No buts. She’s not in a good way. Stay here, please,” said Daniel before turning his back on the rest of the team. Anna waited for him, not sure what to expect inside. Daniel pushed open the bedroom door to find Bex seizing, her airways blocked by vomit, and her face becoming a pale blue colour. Anna snapped into action, and snapped on a pair of latex gloves.

“Move away anything she could hit,” she ordered before dropping her bag and clearing Rebecca’s airways. After a few moments, the seizing lessened, and the colour started returning to her face. Anna pulled back Rebecca’s blonde hair, and noticed the dark bruise.

“Daniel, what’s going on?” Asked Anna.

“I honestly have no idea; she messaged me asking for help, and I found her sitting in the corner, blood pouring down her arms, and that bruise on her head. I don’t know what to think Anna, but we’ve got to look out for her,” replied Daniel wearily. He held Bex in the recovery position as Anna carefully peeled off the towel.

“I feel there are some of these will need stitches; they’re really deep.” A thought crossed her mind, something she hoped wouldn’t ever cross her mind.

“Daniel, do you think she would have tried to kill herself?” Asked Anna softly. Daniel shrugged.

“She’s got a lot going on for her; I don’t know,” said Daniel. Rebecca opened her eyes slowly, taking in where she was.

“Bex, can you tell me what day it is?” Asked Anna, pulling out a flashlight and shining it into Rebecca’s eyes.

“Tuesday… I think,” she replied, trying to shield her eyes from the blinding light.

“Mm. Have you ever had a seizure before?” Asked Anna. Bex shook her head.

“No. Why?”

“You’ve just had a grand mal seizure Bex,” said Anna. She glanced up and noticed the empty pill bottle on the dresser. She grabbed it, and checked the date.

“This prescription was only filled yesterday, and now it’s empty.” Kenzie walked straight into the bedroom, and her jaw dropped. Daniel spotted her, and pushed her out of the bedroom.

“What are you doing in here?” Asked Daniel.

“I came to tell you the ambulance was here… What’s going on in there?” Asked Kenzie, trying to see past Daniel.

“Something that I didn’t want you to see. Please Kenz, just trust me, and let the ambo’s in here,” said Daniel, pleading. Kenzie knew something was up, and that Daniel wasn’t telling her. She walked outside and left the door open for the ambulance officers and their gurney. In moments they had Bex loaded onto the stretcher, and were wheeling her out. Liam and Kieran stood back to the side as one of their own team members was taken out. Kenzie moved to follow them, and Kieran
grabbed her.

“Kenz, I don’t think that’s wise,” he said quietly as Anna came out. Kenz nodded, and stood back, leaning against the wall.

“Will she be okay?” asked Kieran, tucking a strand of hair behind Anna’s ear. Anna shrugged her shoulders as she peeled the used latex gloves off her hands.

“I just don’t know. Physically? She should be fine. Mentally though, she’s an absolute wreck. We didn’t see this coming, and we’re lucky that she opened up to Daniel, otherwise it could have been the coroner here today,” said Anna wearily.


“He’s cleaning up inside, and he’s asked me to tell you to just go back to base. He’ll talk to you there,” said Anna.

“What? No way. I’m team leader, and he does not call the shots.” She pushed past Liam and Kieran and walked inside Rebecca’s apartment.

“Daniel, what the hell is going on?” Demanded Kenzie. Daniel was sitting on Rebecca’s bed, trying to hold back his own tears. He glanced up at Kenzie, and hurriedly wiped away the fallen drops.

“It’s nothing that concerns you Kenzie. Drop it,” said Daniel, standing up and dusting himself down.

“It is not nothing! Why was one of my team in serious medical trouble today, requiring ambulance services, and why aren’t you telling me what is going on?” Yelled Kenzie.

“Because it’s none of your business,” said Daniel firmly.

“Damn straight it is! Tell me what the hell is going on, or there’s a warning going on your permanent record,” threatened Kenzie.

“I can’t tell you,” said Daniel, his voice still even despite the anger boiling up inside himself.


“I can’t tell you Kenzie. You’ve got to trust me,” pleaded Daniel. She slapped him across the cheek, hard enough to leave a red, angry handprint that coloured his face. He glanced at her, confused.

“Tell me,” she demanded.

“I can’t!” He exclaimed, all of a sudden seeming bigger than what he really was. Liam and Kieran had been listening, and Liam intervened.

“Kenzie, drop it,” said Liam, grabbing her arm to pull her away. She shook her arm out of his grasp.

“No; I’m not leaving until De Luca tells me what is going on!” Exclaimed Kenzie. Daniel exploded.

“That poor girl there, the one you’ve been accusing me of seeing, and yes, I know what you’ve been thinking, was raped a week ago. Instead of being a kind, concerned team leader, you took the
defensive side, talking about her behind her back, instead of actually taking the time to find out what was going on for her! She tried to commit suicide today because she feels like there’s no-one out there to help her, to look out for her. And all you’ve done is gone and made the situation worse. Just leave me alone!” Yelled Daniel, storming out of the cramped bedroom. He needed time to think, time to process everything that had happened…

He needed to make sure that Bex was okay…

Daniel wished that Kenzie could see what was going on; another part of him realised that she was still quite young, and had a lot of learning to do. He sat in his own patrol, and leant his head on the steering wheel. He couldn’t believe that Bex had gotten so low, and had felt so down that she needed to end her own life. He threw the patrol into gear, and headed back to base. He needed to check in with Mark and Cassie before he went over to the hospital. He drove in silence, absorbed in his own thoughts, thoughts of Kenzie, and even more so, of Bex. He pulled up into the drive, and noticed that Kenzie, Anna, Liam and Kieran weren’t back yet. Daniel strode inside the garage, and headed straight to the locker room to clean up before talking to Cassie. The dried blood on his hands came off easily under the warm soapy water, and Daniel wished it was this easy to help Bex. He walked up the stairs, and knocked on Cassie’s door.

“Cass, can I come in?” He asked quietly.

“Of course Daniel, take a seat,” said Cassie, finishing off her sentence with flourish. She put her pen down and folded her arms.

“What can I do for you?” She asked, giving Daniel her full attention.

“Look. I don’t know how to start this, but Rebecca tried to kill herself today,” said Daniel in a rush. Cassie stared at him, and then stood up.

“Mark, I think you need to be in here as well,” said Cassie. Mark came inside and closed the door behind himself, and leant against the wall.

“Repeat what you just said to me,” said Cassie to Daniel.

“Bex tried to commit suicide today,” repeated Daniel. Mark took a seat.

“What? Why didn’t she talk to us?” Asked Mark.

“I don’t think Bex could have spoken to anyone. Ever since the rape and being shoved into that cleaning closet, Bex hasn’t felt like she can speak. She’s afraid of the rest of the world, and none of us are really doing that for her,” said Daniel.

“Is she okay now?” Asked Cassie.

“She’s been taken to the hospital; it’s where I’ll head now. Then I’ve got to come back and have a chat with Kenzie; I had a bit of an outburst at her today, and I didn’t mean it.” Mark nodded.

“Go, check on Bex for us. We can deal with Kenzie when you come back.”

Kenzie looked around the coffee shop, wishing her eyes weren’t as red and puffy as she knew they were; people were staring. She’d walked away from Bex’s apartment, leaving Kieran, Anna and Liam to head back to base by themselves. She sipped her coffee, savouring the bitter taste, and watched as a vaguely familiar man crossed over to her.
“Excuse me, are you Kenzie Worthington?” He asked. Kenzie nodded, unsure of what to say.

“It’s me. Nolan,” he said, looking into her eyes. Kenzie recognised his face instantly, and smiled.

“Nolan?” She replied, standing up. She wrapped her arms around him. Nolan had been her previous partner when she was in Perth, and their partnership had evolved into something stronger after the Commissioner’s meeting last July. Nolan kissed the top of her head.

“I’ve missed you,” he said softly.

“I’ve missed you too Nole.” He stepped back a little, and put a hand under her chin, lifting her face up to see his.

“You’ve been crying,” he stated simply. Kenzie nodded, averting her eyes. She had missed Nolan, missed his company, but Daniel had been there for her. She felt conflicted, but turned to her first love.

“It’s been a long day,” she said quietly.

“Come back to my place, like old days. We can talk,” suggested Nolan. Kenzie nodded, and took Nolan’s hand, heading out the door. It turned out he lived in the apartment building next to Rebecca’s, and Kenzie followed him up the stairs. He opened the door for her, and allowed her inside. She sat down in the spacious living room, and Nolan moved to the kitchen to make coffee. He returned five minutes later, and handed Kenzie a steaming mug.

“So what’s eating you up? You won’t keep it inside very long; you never could when we were working in Perth,” said Nolan, sipping his coffee.

“It’s my team partner Daniel. I just don’t know what to do with him; he’s so caught up in the drama of another team member that I feel like he’s forgotten me. I thought we were dating, but we haven’t even been seeing each other. Am I being too picky?” Asked Kenzie. At only nineteen, she hadn’t had an exceptional amount of experience in relationships, and was never really sure when something was her fault. Nolan shook his head.

“No. He should be paying more attention to you Kenzie; you’re beautiful, and you deserve all the attention. Who is Daniel anyway?” Asked Nolan.

“He’s the swimmer in Elite,” replied Kenzie.

“It sounds like he’s not worth it Kenz. I transferred here to Sydney to be with you; I didn’t expect to find you in the arms of some other guy,” said Nolan.

“You… you transferred here to be with me?” Replied Kenzie, shocked.

“Of course. Perth isn’t the same without you, and Georgia isn’t my favourite team leader. She does a good job, but she’s not you,” said Nolan.

“So which unit are you working in?” Asked Kenzie, still amazed that her former flame was sitting in front of her.

“Dee Why. This means we can spend some more time together,” said Nolan, taking her hand in his. Kenzie’s heart felt conflicted; she loved Daniel…

But did she love Nolan more?
Bex let her head fall back against the pillow, and waited for the retribution she would surely receive from Daniel, from Cassie, and most likely, from Kenzie. Daniel stood in the doorway, arms folded.

“What did they say?” He asked.

“That I need to stay overnight, and they want me to see a counsellor. I’ve got to come back in a week and have the stitches in my arm removed, and they’ve revoked my medical clearance at the moment, so I can’t work,” she said, sounding bored.

“You could have died today,” said Daniel, sitting next her. Bex nodded.

“I know.”

“You can talk to us no matter what. Cassie and Mark will be here for you; I’m here for you,” said Daniel.


“She can deal with it. Your family is in New Zealand, and you need people here that you know you can talk to. You’re like a little sister to me, and I don’t want anything to happen to you. Promise me you’ll come and talk to me next time, rather than going to an extreme,” pleaded Daniel. Bex let the tears stream down her face before turning to Daniel.

“Can you promise me it gets better?” Bex broke down again, and Daniel’s heart went out for her. He couldn’t believe he’d missed the cues, missed what had happened for her. He knew that everyone else had missed it too. He sat on the bed next to her, and pulled her close.

“Bex, you should have talked to me. I wouldn’t have judged,” said Daniel quietly. She shook her head.

“But Kenzie would have been upset that we were with each other, and I couldn’t have you telling her. If I went to Mark or Cassie, they would have removed me from my job, and I need the money. I tried to keep going Daniel, but I just couldn’t do it.” Daniel just held her as she wept out all of her fears, until she finally relaxed and fell asleep. He extracted himself from underneath her as the doctor came in.

“Are you her partner?” Asked the female quietly. Daniel shook his head.

“No. I found her this afternoon. Is she going to be okay?” He asked, stepping outside her room.

“She’s suffering from depression and anxiety. I’m going to prescribe some medication, but I think she should stay with someone for a while. Has she got any family she can stay with?” Asked the doctor. Daniel shook his head.

“All her family are in New Zealand. She can stay with me for a little while,” said Daniel. He just wanted her to be okay, to be safe. He didn’t want a repeat of the day’s events.

“It’s sorted then. I’ll do her discharge papers.”

It was getting late, and Kenzie thought about leaving. She didn’t though, preferring to stay with Nolan. She was tired, and over fighting with Daniel. For the time being, Nole was safer. She was leaning against his chest, listening to his heartbeat, to each breath he was taking. He stroked her dark hair. He’d missed this; missed her smell, her touch, every moment she’d spent with him in
Perth. They’d been inseparable…

"Worthington! You’ve got ropes to clean again!" Called Georgia Willow. Kenzie sighed before walking through the office out to the garage. The station at Perth was all one level, and the garage was at the side. Nolan was polishing one of their patrols, and watched as Kenzie entered the garage, heading for the rope cupboard. He knew deep down that he loved her, and had to have her. He wasn’t even sure if she knew who he really was. Although, she had to; he was the team leader.


“Cleaning ropes like Willow asked me. Why?” She asked, timid.

“Just wanted to make sure you were doing something. I’m tired of you standing around,” said Nolan, returning to his polishing. Kenzie pulled out the ropes, and then realised they’d been cleaned and returned to the cupboard. She glanced at Nolan, and grinned a little to herself. She may only just be eighteen, but she knew he was one of the hottest guys in Perth. If only he’d notice her…

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“Right team, we’ve got a callout to Neerabup National Park. Group lost in there. Our job is to go out and find the idiots,” called Georgia down the stairs. Nolan simply stood up, and his team were up and running into the garage to climb into their patrols. Nolan looked at Kenzie.

“I want you in my patrol,” he said quietly. Kenzie nodded, but inside, she was trembling. What did Nolan want with her? She walked out to his patrol and got in carefully, making sure her uniform was correct, and that she was tidy. Nolan got in the driver’s side and pulled out of the garage. It was silent for at least ten minutes, until Nolan broke the silence.

“Kenzie; I think I like you.”

They left the commissioners dinner a little more than drunk; Nolan was off his face, and Kenzie had a severe case of the giggles. Nolan had his arm wrapped around her, and kissed her face.

“I think I’m falling in love,” he slurred to her. She giggled.

“No way! You’re like… old!” She exclaimed, before almost tripping over. Lucky for her, Nolan was holding her up, and managed to keep her upright.

“Don’t go falling for me now,” quipped Nolan. They walked on for a little longer before arriving at Nolan’s tiny apartment.

“I should be heading home,” said Kenzie. She still had two streets to walk down before getting to her place. She started to walk away, and Nolan pulled her into himself. He pressed his lips to hers.

“Don’t ever leave me…”

She jolted awake as she realised she’d promised Nolan she’d never leave him…

She’d promised Daniel the same thing…
Cass sat in her office, trying to think through what she was going to do with Bex. She needed her to be active on the team; not holed up with psychiatric appointments. She was a good team member, and had just had a rough time as of late. Mark watched her through the office window, and brought her in a glass of water and two paracetamol.

“Hard decision?” He asked, handing her the two pills and the glass. She swallowed the pills gratefully, and sipped the water.

“Just working out what to do with Bex,” replied Cassie, rubbing her temples.

“I’ve had the same thing with duty rosters. I don’t know how RSO coped with only five members in their active team for so long, but I just don’t think we can make it work. We need Bex to be active.” Mark had worked in Sydney a long time, even with Marchello, but couldn’t recall a time when something like this had happened. Cassie on the other hand, recalled something similar happening when she worked for a small time in Canberra; with herself…

“No, we need Bex to stay on team and active. She needs it, and we need her.”

Kenzie stayed leaning against Nolan, wishing that life wasn’t so complicated. She didn’t want to have to choose between Daniel or Nolan, and was still trying to figure out a way to keep both happy. She didn’t want to hurt either of them, and she didn’t know what to do…

Daniel wrapped his arms around Kenzie, and she pushed him away gently.

“Daniel. Please, don’t,” she said quietly. She slipped out of the bed they had just slept in, and pulled her shirt over her head.

“Kenz. Kenzie, what did I do?” Asked Daniel, trying to follow her into his bathroom. Kenzie came back out, her hair pinned back up in a business like ponytail. Her make-up was smudged.

“I’m only nineteen Daniel. I have no idea what I’m doing. I don’t even know if this is right. I want to go back to being friends, but I just don’t know if we can. I shouldn’t have done this, I wasn’t ready.” The tears fell steadily down her face, and she hurriedly wiped them away. Daniel took her by the tops of her shoulders, and turned her to face him.

“I’m sorry Kenzie. You’re so mature and level-headed that I forgot how young you really are. It was my fault for pushing you into this. I was the one who took things too fast.” He kissed the top of her forehead.

“Do you want me to take you home?”

“Promise me you don’t have any secrets like that,” he said softly. Kenzie shook her head.

“Nothing like that. At least, no secrets that are going to kill me, or risk everyone else’s life. Cross my heart and hope to die,” she said, laughing. Daniel laughed a little as well, and winced as his ribs complained. The attendant in with them pushed a dose of morphine into the drip that was in Daniel’s arm. Kenzie looked at him.

“I’m so sorry about the other day. I didn’t mean to just… just leave like that.” She looked down at her lap, not wanting to look him in the eyes. He pulled her hand close and kissed the back of it.

“Don’t worry about it. Take things at your own pace, don’t try and change because of me, or any other guy. Don’t even think about it. Be yourself,” he said to her. Kenzie smiled at him, unable to
contain herself.

“Don’t you ever change De Luca, I don’t know what I’d do.”

She knew from then on that he had to be the guy for her…

The only problem was that Nolan was back…

Daniel or Nolan?

Daniel shook Bex gently, waking her up.

“What’s wrong?” She asked groggily.

“You’re being discharged, and you’re coming back to my place,” said Daniel gently.

“What about Kenzie?” She asked, a little frightened.

“Kenzie needs to understand that you’re important too. I’d be doing the same thing for Anna, or Kieran, or even Liam if the same thing had happened to them. Don’t worry about it,” said Daniel. Bex nodded and Daniel helped her off the bed. The car ride to Daniel’s house was quiet, Bex looking out the window the entire time. He stopped in front of a town house, and Bex glanced at him.

“Where are we?” She asked nervously. He laughed easily.

“I forget you haven’t been to my place before,” said Daniel. Bex opened the door, and got out carefully. Daniel locked the car, and led her up the steps. Inside it was spacious; very masculine in decoration, but Bex supposed that Kenzie would soon fix that up. It was only a matter of time before they announced their engagement, or just went off and got married on the sly. Daniel’s voice shook her out of her reverie.

“The spare room is set up for you; blankets, ensuite bathroom. Let me know if you need anything,” said Daniel. Someone knocked at the front door, and Bex tensed.

“Sit on the couch and relax. It’s just Anna and Kieran; Anna brought over some of your clothes and things, and then they picked up pizza on the way. They’re staying for dinner tonight,” said Daniel. Bex relaxed, but only slightly. Daniel opened the door, allowing Anna and Kieran inside, the savoury aroma permeating the house. Bex realised how hungry she was. Daniel cleared the coffee table, and then brought out plates and glasses as Kieran produced the bottle of Coke. Daniel grabbed the box of medication and a glass of water for Bex, and handed her the tiny tablet and the glass.

“Take this; before you forget it,” said Daniel before taking a seat. Bex nodded and swallowed the tiny tablet. Anna served out the warm pizza, handing out plates to the others.

“Hey, where’s Kenzie?” Asked Kieran. Daniel shook his head.

“I don’t know. I messaged her and Liam, and she didn’t reply. Liam’s out with a couple of RSO members, so he declined. Mark’s at home with Charlie and Tyler, and Cassie’s sitting at her place with a stack of paperwork, so she’s not coming either. It’s just the four of us; and this beats sitting in a crowded pub,” said Daniel. Bex felt… safe. It was a change from the fear that had ruled her life for the past week. She hoped she’d never have to feel that afraid, or that alone, ever again.

Anna laid a hand on Bex, and smiled gently at her.
“It gets better.”
“Daniel, I don’t know if I can do this just yet,” said Bex nervously, standing in front of the bathroom mirror. Her stomach was churning, light-headed. In seconds Daniel was behind her.

“Bex, we’ve talked about this. You’re ready. Your therapist says so, and Cassie wants you back to help her with the backlog of paperwork she has to do,” said Daniel gently. He rubbed her back, trying to make her feel at ease. The feelings of fear and stress were emanating from her, to the point where even Daniel felt uneasy.

“I… I can’t go,” she whispered.

“Bex, don’t let the fear control you. You’re safe. I’ll be right there with you, every step of the way,” said Daniel comfortingly. She turned and embraced him tightly. He smiled into her hair.

“Does that mean we can go now?” He asked, amused. Bex nodded.

“We can go,” she whispered. He picked up her work bag and his, and they walked out to the patrol parked in the driveway.

“What will happen today?” Asked Bex, nervous.

“Cassie’s going to start you on light duties; paperwork, phone calls, computer work. Mark will continue to join the rest of us on Rescues until Head Office clears you to go out,” said Daniel, pulling out of the driveway. Bex nodded, still unsure, but willing to follow Daniel out. The drive to HQ was quiet, each absorbed in their own thoughts. As they pulled up, Bex noticed that the helicopter was missing.

“Liam must be out,” she commented.

“What makes you say that?” Asked Daniel, grabbing their bags.

“The helo is missing,” said Bex, heading up the stairs. Kenzie met her at the top of the stairs and embraced Bex.

“I’m so sorry I didn’t understand,” said Kenzie. Bex felt uncomfortable with the interaction, and after waiting a few moments, pulled away without saying a word.

“Bex; in my office please,” called Cassie. Bex threw a frightened glance to Daniel, and then followed Cassie inside.

“Please Rebecca, take a seat,” said Cassie gently. Bex took a seat, heart pounding, mouth dry.

“I’ve got some reports I want you to enter into the system today, and to take any phone calls. Mark is back-up to the team today, so you’re taking Mark’s place. You okay with that?” Asked Cassie. Bex nodded, and Cassie pushed over a stack of paperwork. Her desk phone jangled, and she waved Bex out of the office as she answered it.

“Hello Rescue Elite Squad.” Bex let the door close, and headed for her desk.

“You okay?” Asked Daniel, sliding his chair across. Bex nodded, and let out a breath she didn’t
know she’d been holding.

“I’m okay,” she said, giving him a weak smile. He returned the smile.

“You were right; Liam’s out this week in Penrith helping with a search and rescue, and they needed
the chopper. We’re working on a skeleton team; we have to ring Special Ops if we need more
people for a rescue or something.” Bex nodded, and glanced around.

“Hey, where are Anna and Kieran?”

Anna had her head hanging over the toilet bowl again, for what seemed like the sixth morning in a
row. Kieran was behind her, holding her blond hair back.

“An, I’ve known viruses to be tough, but this is ridiculous. Surely you should go and see a doctor
by now,” said Kieran. Anna shook her head, dry-heaving again. Kieran rubbed her back.

“Why not?” He asked gently.

“Because I know what’s wrong,” said Anna, standing up shakily and heading for the sink. She
rinsed her mouth out, and pulled back her hair.

“What’s wrong?” He asked. Anna glanced up at him, and Kieran noticed the tears now streaming
down her face.

“I’m pregnant Kieran.” Kieran sat down heavily.

“Are you sure?” He asked slowly. Anna nodded.

“I’m positive. I went to the doctors, asked him to retest. I had three pregnancy tests, and they’re all
positive. I’m having a baby Kieran.” Kieran dropped his head in his hands. A baby changed
everything, would mean he would have to be responsible and mature. It meant an end to fun. He
and Anna had never discussed kids, and he didn’t know where she stood with having a child. He
couldn’t fathom being a father.

“What do you want to do?” Asked Kieran. Anna stood up, and started pacing the room.

“I don’t know. I don’t want a child, I don’t want to end up treating it like my father treated me. I’m
not ready for this Kieran!” Exclaimed Anna.

“You’re not ready for this? I’m not ready for this either! I’m not ready to be a father, to have that
kind of responsibility Anna! What were you thinking?” He yelled back at her.

“What was I thinking? This is a two way party Kieran; this is your fault too!”

“My fault? My fault? Don’t go blaming this on me,” said Kieran, pointing a finger at Anna.

“Get out,” she said quietly, wanting the fight to end.

“What?” He asked.

“Get out! Get out and leave me alone! I don’t want to see you anymore!”

Nolan watched the station-house carefully, observing their movements. He wanted Kenzie, wished
she was here with him. For now though, he had to let her decide. It had to be her choice. That
didn’t mean he couldn’t influence her though. He’d have her back in his arms soon enough. The phone he had resting on the seat buzzed.

*Hi Mum. Miss you. Will try and call this week, but busy at work. Will email later. Love you. Kenz.* He glanced up at the building in front of him.

*She would eventually find out. For now? It was his little secret.*

—

“Has anyone seen Anna and Kieran today?” Asked Cassie, emerging from her office. Daniel and Bex both shook their heads, as did Kenzie.


“That leaves us down three members. Bex, can you call them both, see where they’re at? Mark’s on his way in; he had to drop Tyler at school today because Charlie’s got a doctor’s appointment.” Bex nodded, and picked up the desk phone, dialling Kieran’s number. She heard a phone ringing in the stairwell, and then Kieran appeared at the top of the stairs.

“I was just ringing you,” commented Bex.

“Do you know where Anna is?” Asked Daniel. Kieran nodded, and took his seat across from De Luca.

“Last I saw her, she was yelling at me to leave her house,” replied Kieran bitterly. Daniel picked up on the foul mood, grabbed Kieran and dragged him down the stairs into the locker room.

“Mate, we’re buds and all, right?” Asked Daniel, closing the door. Kieran nodded, taking a seat on the bench.

“Then what’s going on with you and Anna? It’s not like you two to just fight like this. There has got to be something setting Anna off,” remarked Daniel.

“She’s pregnant,” said Kieran, leaning back against the wall. Daniel sat down heavily.


“She went to the doctor, was tested and everything. She’s definitely pregnant Daniel.” Kieran was so conflicted inside; part of him was a little excited about a baby. The other half was completely against it, and the way it would affect his life. They both heard footsteps, and froze. Bex knocked on the door.

“You’ve got a callout; Mark will meet you at the accident site,” said Bex.

“What are the details?” Asked Daniel, standing up. Kieran’s problems would have to wait.

“All we know is that it’s at a school about fifteen minutes from here. Some chemistry project gone wrong,” said Bex, checking her notes. Daniel nodded as Kenzie joined them downstairs.

“Let’s go then,” she announced. Bex watched as they left, and felt her heart start racing. She’d not really been left alone since her incident, and now she was feeling a little unstable. She returned upstairs to the office, and hid in the space between her desk and Mark’s. She tried to hide her tears, tried to be strong, but today, she felt fragile and broken.

It was a quiet flight for Liam, just him and his beloved machine. He missed Andy, for sure, but
was happy to be flying again. His thoughts crossed to Andy again, and he smiled to himself. He’d been out on three dates with her, and every moment felt so surreal to him. She was perfect, and just spending time with her made him happy. He checked his log; he was supposed to head straight to Penrith, but decided to take a detour instead. The Blue Mountains were beautiful and breathtaking, and before Liam decided to head to Penrith, he wanted to see the mountains again. He changed direction, heading out over the hills. In minutes, he was there, gazing over them again.

“I should bring Andy here one day,” he said to himself. He went to turn back, and his fuel light lit up like a Christmas tree. He tapped the light, puzzled. He’d fuelled before he left, and had enough to fly to Penrith and back at least twice. A detour over the mountains shouldn’t have meant anything. His engine coughed and spluttered, before dying completely. The chopper rotors ceased, and Liam knew he was in trouble.

Serious trouble…

“Kieran, Mark, you take the triage section. Daniel and I will get the assistant teacher and the kids out,” ordered Kenzie. Mark nodded; it was her team, and he was glad she was taking control. He was distracted, thoughts on his wife at the doctor’s. He shook himself to attention, and moved to create a triage section with Kieran.

“How the hell does a simple experiment go so wrong?” Asked Kieran, putting a field dressing on a girls burn.

“Should ask their head teacher; he’s being questioned by police now. It looked suspicious, so when we got the callout, so did the cops,” replied Mark, wrapping a bandage around one girls arm; she had a metal rod piercing through it. She was in shock though, and hadn’t seemed to have taken notice of it. She was more concerned about someone called Amy.

“Please, you’ve got to tell me that Amy is okay,” begged the girl.

“Where was she?” Asked Kieran.

“She was right near the teacher’s desk when it went up; he was getting her to help demonstrate. She has to be okay! We’ve been best friends for forever!” Cried the girl.

“Miss, what’s your name?” Asked Mark.

“Joyce Parker,” replied the girl, sniffing a little.

“Joyce, we’ll keep you updated as best as possible, but right now, we need to look after you. Are you in any pain?” Asked Mark. She shook her head, and Mark looked taken aback.

“I want her genetics. A rod through my arm, and I’d be screaming like a girl,” said Mark. Joyce looked down at her arm, and back at Mark.

“I have CIPA. I’m not about to feel anything,” she responded. Mark glanced at her, and then back at Kieran.

“Where’s Anna when you want her? Her type of case, her medical expertise would be fantastic about now!” Exclaimed Mark.

“She’s probably at home, dealing with her own problems,” replied Kieran. Mark glanced at him. Joyce held her good hand to her chest.
“Is it always this hard to breathe?” She asked. Mark looked at her.

“Were you thrown when the room exploded?” Asked Mark. She nodded, trying to draw in a breath.

“Tension pneumothorax,” said Mark and Kieran simultaneously. It wasn’t uncommon, but if not found, could prove fatal. Joyce was becoming pale, as the lack of oxygen started to affect her. Mark scrabbled through the medi-kit, and found the hollow needle he was looking for.

“Joyce, we’re going to release the pressure that’s building in your chest, and you’re going to be able to breathe, okay?” Joyce barely nodded. Mark punctured the skin with the needle, and heard a hiss of air. The colour flooded back into her cheeks swiftly, and she took a deeper breath. Mark glanced at Kieran as ambulance crews started to take away some of the students. He pointed a finger at Kieran.

“I don’t care what’s going on with Anna, unless she’d dying, we need her here today.”

Anna didn’t pick up the phone when it rang; despite the fact it rang numerous times. She sat in the middle of her loungeroom, head in her hands, sobbing. Thoughts of their argument filtered through her head…

“An, I’ve known viruses to be tough, but this is ridiculous. Surely you should go and see a doctor by now.”

She remembered shaking her head.

“Why not?”

“Because I know what’s wrong.”

“What’s wrong?”

“I’m pregnant Kieran.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m positive. I went to the doctors, asked him to retest. I had three pregnancy tests, and they’re all positive. I’m having a baby Kieran.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I don’t know. I don’t want a child, I don’t want to end up treating it like my father treated me. I’m not ready for this Kieran!”

“You’re not ready for this? I’m not ready for this either! I’m not ready to be a father, to have that kind of responsibility Anna! What were you thinking?”

“What was I thinking? This is a two way party Kieran; this is your fault too!”

“My fault? My fault? Don’t go blaming this on me!”

“Get out.”

“What?”

“Get out! Get out and leave me alone! I don’t want to see you anymore!”
She knew she didn’t want this baby, but she wasn’t one for abortion. Not usually anyway. She hadn’t told Kieran that this was the second pregnancy; the first being after some violent history in Darwin. She’d kept secrets from him, secrets to keep him safe, to keep her safe. Every moment of her pregnancy so far had reminded her of painful memories she thought she’d left in Darwin…

Memories she hoped she’d left in Darwin…

Clearly she was mistaken…

She’d remembered feeling spaced out. Floaty, and out of control. The boy she thought she loved had listened to her father when he had ordered him to take her clothes off, and was pulling her clothes off violently. She’d tried to fight back, but to no avail; the boy was stronger than her, she was drugged, and her father helped hold her down. The boy was rough, uncaring, and she found herself blacking out. She didn’t want to ever remember what had happened.

She’d been sixteen when she’d found out she was pregnant.

And she didn’t know what to do…

A baby.

Another responsibility.

She knew she couldn’t do this, not with her father abusing her at every chance he got. She couldn’t bring a baby into the world, not with him around. Something as precious as a life needed to be kept safe from horrors like James Hunt. So she did what she thought was best.

She had an abortion.

It nearly killed her to lose the baby. She’d wanted someone to be able to go through this with her, someone she could nurture and look after. But she knew it had been the best option, for everyone involved. She cried for weeks after that, endured her father’s torture for another year and a half before finally taking the plunge and running away.

All she wanted was a friend.

Someone to stand by her.

Now it seemed like Kieran wasn’t the one.

Who could stand by her now?

She knew what she had to do…

She knew how to fix it…

And she’d do it alone.

Kieran dialled Anna’s number again, and it went straight to voicemail. He chucked the phone across the school courtyard.

“She’s still not answering. We’re on our own,” said Kieran angrily.
“Remind me to get Cass to dock her pay,” responded Mark. He got Joyce breathing again, and then transferred her to the ambulance, giving the paramedics strict instructions to deliver to the hospital about her care.

“Done. Let’s see how she does at therapy with less money to afford it,” replied Kieran. Daniel and Kenzie came out of the building, the assistant teacher and the student walking in front of them. The student, Amy, was holding her arm gingerly, and her face was covered in a large burn. She had a dressing covering the wound, and Kenzie was supporting her out. The assistant teacher looked no better, and Daniel was struggling with his weight as he fought to stay conscious. Kieran sprinted over to Daniel and caught the aide just as he collapsed.

“What’s the verdict for him?” Asked Kieran, carrying the man over to a stretcher.

“Burns, smoke inhalation, and we hazard a guess at a few fractured ribs. Possible concussion as well,” said Daniel as a paramedic joined them.

“Geez, that’s a little choice,” said Kieran as the paramedics carried the teacher’s assistant away.

“Yes. But, that means we’re finished now!” Exclaimed Daniel. Kieran furrowed his brow.


“Means I have to go back to and deal with Anna. Honestly, I don’t know what’s going on with her at the moment. She’s so emotional! It’s just a baby,” replied Kieran.

“That’s what women are like Kieran. Especially pregnant ones,” said Mark. Kieran ignored everyone, and got into the patrol with Mark, wishing that his ultra-happy mood would just disappear. Unfortunately, his wish didn’t come true. In minutes, he felt his aggravation reach peak, and he snapped at Mark.

“Just leave it, okay?” He shouted. Mark looked taken aback, and stayed silent from the rest of the trip. When they arrived at HQ, Mark got out.

“Kieran. In my office. Now.” He slammed the door, frustrated, and headed up the stairs. Cassie was in her office, busy.

“Anyone seen Bex?” Asked Daniel as he dropped his bag and jacket on his desk. Cass shook her head.

“No, not really. Isn’t she out there?” Asked Cassie. Daniel shook his head.

“No. I thought she would have been, but she’s not.” He heard a sob, and he and Kenzie froze.


“Sounded like it was from next to Mark’s outside desk,” replied Kenzie. Daniel walked over carefully to the desk and pulled out the chair carefully.

“Bex, what are you doing under the desk?” Asked Daniel gently, sitting down next to her.

“I’m not ready for this; I’m not ready to be here yet,” she whispered.

“You are. We’re here with you. Why didn’t you go and see Cassie?” Asked Daniel.

“Because I’m afraid.”
The chopper hung precariously in the thick canopy, the occupant hanging by his restraints. A head wound bled freely. He groaned, trapped in his broken metal prison. He tried to use the radio, but it just spoke static. He felt a tear slide down his bruised face.

He hoped he’d see Andy again…

Anna was booked into the hospital overnight; the abortion hadn’t gone as smoothly as they’d hoped, and she’d had a reaction to the drug they’d used. She was exhausted from the crying, and wished her mother had been alive. She would have been the one to look after Anna, to comfort her. She’d been murdered by her father when Anna was eleven, and Anna remembered the frightening moment of finding her mother…

It was a warm August afternoon; unseasonably warm, but Anna didn’t mind. She walked home from school, enjoying the warmth, but dreading going home to her father. She’d dirtied her uniform playing at school again, and that would earn her a beating. He’d been particularly aggressive the past few days, and Anna didn’t really want to return to the tiny house. She only did it because of her mother; Nina had never fought back, but tried to protect Anna from James as much as possible. She was the one that snuck Anna food after her father had passed out on the couch after drinking, the one that tried to keep her clothes in the best possible condition so she wasn’t laughed at when she attended school. Anna loved her mother.

She never expected to find her that way…

As she meandered on home, she picked a flower, hoping to give it to her mother.

Five more steps.

Four.

Three.

Two.

One.

She didn’t announce her arrival home like she was supposed to. She didn’t want to get into trouble off her father for dirtying her uniform again. She crept inside, and found her father standing over her mother’s body, gun in his hand, his chest heaving, blood seeping from the gunshot wound to her mother’s head.

The flower dropped to the floor, the simple joy of finding it lost.

“You didn’t call when you entered the house,” snarled James. He dropped the gun and slapped her across the face, leaving an angry red handprint.

“What did you do to Mummy?” She asked.

“She burnt my lunch again, and forgot to pick up the beer. She won’t ever forget it again,” sneered James. Anna dropped to the floor, blood staining her uniform.

“Mummy? Mummy, please wake up,” begged the eleven-year-old, tugging on her mother’s arm. James pulled her away violently, slamming her into a wall. She groaned as the pain shot through her.
“Your mummy’s not going to wake up you little wench. She’s dead!”

A nurse knocked on the door, jolting Anna from her painful memories.

“Miss Hunt, there’s a gentleman out here by the name of Kieran Gordon. I didn’t know if you were up to visitors or not, and I said I would check with you. Do you want to see him?” Asked the nurse. Anna remembered her name as Adara. She grabbed the bag next to her bed and threw up in it, before lying back down again. She nodded to Adara as she cleaned up.

“He can come in Adara,” said Anna, leaning back against the pillows. Adara nodded, and opened the door.

“Sir, you can come in, but not for long. Miss Hunt isn’t well, and she needs to rest,” said Adara. Kieran walked inside, taking in Anna’s pale face and her bedridden status. He took a seat next to her bed, and tried to take her hand. She didn’t allow him to hold her hand, withdrawing it from his grasp.

“What happened?” He asked quietly.

“I dealt with a problem Kieran. There was no way I could bring a child into this world; no way I could juggle all the problems I’ve got going on now and a baby. It’s over and done with,” she said firmly, but Kieran could still see the tears in her eyes.

“Did you really think this through?” Asked Kieran.

“This isn’t the first time. I can’t be a mother, I can’t have a baby. I’m so scared of turning into my father, scared of what he did to me. I had an abortion when I was sixteen after my father allowed a boy to have his way with me. I couldn’t handle a baby then, and I certainly can’t handle a baby now.” Kieran was finally allowed a glimpse into Anna’s broken life, her broken heart, and her painful memories. She dissolved into tears, memories flooding to the surface.

“Anna, what else haven’t you told me?” Asked Kieran gently. She rolled onto her side to face him.

“There is so much I have never told you; that I’ve never told anyone,” said Anna, curling up as best as she could. Kieran tucked a strand of Anna’s hair behind her ear, and let his hand rest on top of hers.

“Like what?” He asked. Anna hiccupped as she tried to form the words.

“Shh. Take your time,” said Kieran soothingly.

“Kieran, he was the one that killed my mother when I was eleven. He shot her in the head,” said Anna, almost gasping for air. The alarm on her monitor went off as her oxygen levels plummeted and her blood pressure sky-rocketed. Adara returned quickly.

“You need to leave,” she announced firmly.

“No, please, let me stay with her,” begged Kieran. Anna’s hand snaked out and grabbed hold of his. She was desperately trying to calm down, Adara could see that.

“You can stay, but she needs to calm down.” Kieran nodded, and talked calmly to Anna. She calmed down eventually, the memories having more effect on her than Kieran had thought. After a while, her breathing returned to normal, and her blood pressure was going down. Adara watched the monitors. She left after making sure that Anna was okay. Kieran was quiet.

“Anna, I’m sorry for getting angry at you. I’ve always been a little more hot-headed than most
people, and I let my anger control me. I promise though, to never be like your father, to support you through anything and everything. I want to be with you, and I’m sorry for getting so angry at you. You were right; we both played our part in this, and I had no right to blame it on you. Can you ever forgive me?”

Daniel pulled Bex to her feet as she dissolved into further tears. He hadn’t realised how fragile she really was; he thought that she would have been okay with Cassie around, but clearly not.

“Shh,” he said quietly, holding her close. Kenzie glared at the pair of them, and stormed off, slamming a door as she went.

“Daniel, do you want to take Bex into my office for a little while?” Asked Mark. Daniel nodded, and led the frightened girl in front of him to Mark’s office, and closed the door quietly behind them.

“Bex, what’s going on? You told me you were okay,” said Daniel. He wasn’t accusing, he just wanted to know, and Bex understood that.

“I was so scared when you guys left. The last time Cassie and I were by ourselves, everything happened with that… that man, and I couldn’t breathe, and then I hid. Daniel, please, don’t leave me,” said Bex, gripping him tightly. Daniel shook his head.

“I’m not leaving you Bex, but you need to tell people what’s going on,” said Daniel quietly. He sat down on Mark’s lounge, and patted the couch next to him. Bex joined him, allowing herself the comfort of his arms.

“How? Why doesn’t Cassie feel like this? Why is it just me?” Asked Bex.

“Cassie wasn’t abused like you were. She was just tied up and knocked out. You were so injured, so upset when we found you. You’ve come such a long way since the day I found you overdosing in your bedroom. You aren’t invincible Bex, but we can be with you as you take these steps,” said Daniel softly. She cried harder into his shirt, and Daniel wished he could help her somehow. Eventually she calmed down, and just stayed leaning against Daniel, an occasional sniffle renting the air. Suddenly, the door was flung open, and Kenzie stood in front of both of them.

“Now you’re back with her? I should have known! How stupid do you take me to be? She’s been staying at your house.” Kenzie turned on the spot and ran, tears streaming down her face. Daniel sighed, leaning his head back on the couch.

“I’m sorry Daniel,” whispered Bex. Daniel shook his head.

“Don’t ever think that it’s your fault. Please. Not when it involves Kenzie. She’s just feeling a little left out at the moment because I’m taking care of you, and spending less time with her. A week ago, she was understanding. Today, she’s feeling frustrated,” replied Daniel.

“Will she be okay?” Asked Bex. She didn’t want to ruin anything between him and Kenzie.

“She’ll be fine Bex. Right now, my main concern is you.”

Anna allowed Kieran to stroke her hair as she lay there, feeling nauseous and upset. Kieran had never heard anything about her father or mother. Well, he knew some of the story about her father,
especially because of the incident that had occurred earlier during the year. But he’d never heard a word about her history, about her family. It only occurred to him now how little he knew about Anna. She sat up quickly, holding a hand over her mouth, and Kieran passed her the basin nearby. She threw up, Kieran holding her hair back out of the way. When she’d finished, Kieran handed her a tissue, and went to her bathroom, returning with a damp cloth. He wiped her face down gently, and she lay back down again, tears still falling.

“I’m sorry Kieran,” said Anna softly.

“Don’t be sorry. Do you want to talk a little more?” Asked Kieran gently. She was quiet for a while, and Kieran thought she’d fallen asleep.

“He used to beat me,” she started.

“When I was little. Mum used to scream at him for hours, and I’d be in my room hiding. He always found me though, told me I was a leech, using up their money. He told me he wished I’d never been born, that I’d run away and die. I think I was six when he first broke my arm, and when Mum took me to the hospital, she told me to tell the doctors I’d fallen out of a tree. I was eight when he gave me my first serious concussion that put me in hospital. I’d not returned quickly enough with the newspaper, and instead he belted me with it, sending me flying into the coffee table. I had twelve stitches put in my forehead that day as well; I split my head open. I was eleven when I came home to find my mother on the floor with a gunshot wound to her head. She’d burnt Dad’s lunch and forgot to restock his beer, and he got angry.” Anna lost her voice, and Kieran stroked back her hair.

“I had no idea An. I really didn’t. Why didn’t you tell me?” Asked Kieran.

“Because I thought you’d never love me,” whispered Anna.

“Oh, Anna. I’d always love you. I always will.”

_He wished he could escape; find a way to survive. It had only been an hour, and the blood still dripped steadily from his nose and split lip. He was probably bleeding from elsewhere, but he couldn’t tell anymore…_

_It hurt so much._

_He hoped they’d realise soon. Hoped that they’d realise when he didn’t show up at Penrith Unit that something was wrong…. _

_Seriously wrong._

_He took a ragged breath, feeling his chest ache as he drew in air._

_He hoped that Andy would be with them…_

_He wanted to see her, wanted her reassurance…_

_He wanted to know he would be okay…_

_Because he had no idea anymore, and that frightened him more than he’d let on. He struggled with the seatbelt for a moment, and it released, sending him plummeting to the ground…_
Daniel checked on Bex; she’d come home and fallen asleep almost instantly on the couch. He had carried her to her room, tucking her under the warm covers, and left her. She obviously needed the sleep, and he wasn’t going to deny her. He left her room, heading for the loungeroom when he heard moaning, then screaming. He sprinted back to Bex’s room, and found her in the midst of a nightmare, her sheets caught up around her.

“Hey, hey. Bex, it’s just a nightmare,” he said soothingly, laying a gentle hand on her shoulder. She sat bolt upright in bed, and then sagged as she realised the vivid images her mind had produced were not real. Daniel put his arms around her, and she just cried.

“I’ll always be here for you Rebecca. You know that. You’re safe.” She nodded.

“I dreamt that no-one wanted me anymore, and I was chasing you all, and you were leaving me, and then Sandy got a hold of me and blamed me for her death. It was awful,” she said quietly.

“You mean Sandie from the Queensland floods?” Asked Daniel. She nodded.

“The same. This isn’t the first time she’s chased me, but it the first time she tried to kill me.” Daniel stroked back her damp hair.

“You’re safe. Remember that.”

Anna awoke to Kieran resting on her bed beside her. She was surprised a nurse hadn’t kicked him out yet, or at least asked him to get off her bed, but she wasn’t complaining. He felt her shifting, and opened his eyes.

“Are you okay?” He asked gently. She nodded.

“I think for the first time in a very long time, I am. I’m sorry I never told you anything,” she said softly.

“You know what? That’s okay. I understand. If I was in the same situation, I don’t think I’d ever be able to tell anyone. I’d want to hide it and hope it went away.”

“Sometimes I wish it would go away. But I know it doesn’t, and sometimes it’s easier telling someone so they can help you get through it.” Liam kissed her forehead.

“I’m glad you felt you could do that with me. I’m sorry for getting upset at you. I really am. Did I tell you that you missed out on a CIPA case today?” He asked cheekily. She pushed him, hard enough for him to almost fall off the bed.

“No way! I blame you for making me miss that!” Kieran laughed first, and then Anna started laughing too. He smiled.

*It was good to hear her laugh again.*

“He was with her again! Nolan, I don’t know what to do with him anymore. He tells me that there’s nothing going on, but every time she sheds a tear, or freaks out, he’s the one saving her. That’s not fair, there has to be something going on there!” Nolan looked on, and agreed with her every word.

“He should be spending time with you, saving you. Not Bex; she’s not good enough for him. You, on the other hand, are much too good for him,” replied Nolan smoothly. Kenzie blushed.
“Really? Daniel never says anything like that. At the moment he’s just yelling at me all the time. I’m always in trouble with him, and nothing I do is right,” she said grumpily. Nolan put a hand under her chin, and lifted it up so he could look directly into her eyes.

“You, my beautiful Kenzie, are absolutely perfect. Don’t forget that.” She blushed a deeper shade of scarlet, and then looked up at him shyly.

*She was falling for him again, just like in Perth…*

Cassie finished up her report for head office, and stretched back. Daniel had taken Bex home after he’d explained what was going on. Kenzie had just walked out of the office, no concern for what work she may have needed to complete. Mark was out, Charlie having called him asking for help with their young son Tyler. It was getting late, and Cassie’s husband Derek had called at least three times already, asking where she was. She didn’t have time to deal with him anymore; they’d been on the rocks for a good six months, and she was tired of forever fighting him. Forever arguing over trivial things. She was tired of him asking her about Mark, about Daniel, about Kieran, about Liam. Cassie’s thoughts changed; she hadn’t heard from Liam. Theoretically, if the job had gone well, she should have heard back from him by now. Her desk phone jangled loudly, jarring her from her thoughts. She heard her door open, and she glanced up as she answered the phone.

“Cassie Parkes, Rescue Elite Squad Sydney. How may I help you?” She asked. She waved at Mark as he sat down in front of her desk.

“Cass, it’s Julia Zenner from Penrith Unit. Your chopper never arrived,” she reported. Cass switched the phone to speaker.

“Can you repeat that Julia? I’ve got Mark Ramirez, our co-ordinator here, and I think he needs to hear this,” replied Cass.

“Hi Mark. Listen, your chopper, the one we asked you to fly up to us to help with a search and rescue? It never showed up. What’s going on?” She asked.

“Honestly Jules, I have no idea. Liam left early this morning to come up and help you; he should have been there in plenty of time. Do you still need a chopper? I can rally around for someone available if you want,” said Mark.

“No, the police force loaned us theirs for today. Have you even heard from your pilot?” She asked. Cassie looked at Mark and shook her head.

“No, we’ve not heard from him. Look, we’ll try and get onto him, and track his GPS, and we’ll keep you posted, okay?”

“Thanks Cass. Thought you guys would need to know. Catch you next Blue Mountains Search and Rescue.” Julia hung up, and Cass looked at Mark.

“So where the hell is Liam?”
Episode 10: Fall

Episode 1.10 - Fall

“Cassie Parkes, Rescue Elite Squad Sydney. How may I help you?”

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“No, we’ve not heard from him. Look, we’ll try and get onto him, and track his GPS, and we’ll keep you posted, okay?”

Liam laid on the cold, unforgiving ground, darkness draping over the bushland like a thick blanket. He felt the temperature drop, seeping into his bones, and he shuddered. He glanced up at the canopy, the helicopter still wedged between a few trees precariously. It groaned ominously, shifting a little, and Liam realised he needed to move, and fast. His injured body protested as he started to drag himself away from the trees, hoping he could make it away before the trees gave way. He made it nearly a metre before the branches gave way under the immense weight, the helo crashing down to the ground. The empty fuel tank went up, a flash of heat as the fire quickly took hold, swallowing trees and scrub fast. Liam pushed himself to his feet, seeing double as he moved, nose still dripping blood, legs aching terribly.

He had to outrun this, and fast.

“What do you mean, you’ve lost him? How the hell do you lose a chopper?” Demanded Andy, still dressed in her bridesmaids dress from Chase and Jess’s wedding, hands on her hips as she stood in front of Mark.

“We’re not sure, but he never made it to the original rescue he was supposed to be attending, and he hasn’t made contact, and we’re assuming that something has gone awry. Dee Why and Penrith will join us in our search; Julia Zenner has authorised use of any facilities we need, and we’re going to head out there shortly. Bex, you’re allowed to join us on this search, and you’ll help me co-ordinate,” explained Cassie.

“Do they have any idea where he went down?” Asked Daniel.

“No, but it’s really not that far from Sydney to Penrith, and there haven’t been any reports of a helicopter crash,” added Mark.

“The Blue Mountains,” exclaimed Andy.
“What?” Asked Cassie. Mark glanced at the map on the wall.

“That’s way off course,” he replied, confused.

“Liam loves the Blue Mountains, goes up there with Kieran every chance he gets,” explained Anna.

“He would have had enough fuel to detour out...” theorised Mark, tracing a line with his finger. Kenzie swivelled around to face her computer, logging on to the internet.

“Mark, there’s a report of a suspicious fire in the Blue Mountains, other side of Springwood near Faulkconbridge. Firies are logging into the system now; what if it’s the chopper?” Asked Kenzie quietly.

“Grab your gear, let’s go!” Called Mark.

“I want to come,” demanded Andy.

“You can’t come; I need permission from Vince to bring you along,” responded Cassie.

“Then ring him and ask him! I need to be there when you find him!” Exclaimed Andy furiously.

“Listen, I don’t have time for this. We can take you along as an observer, but not a Rescue worker. You need to stay at the co-ordination point with Cassie and Bex, and you definitely need to be wearing something other than what you’re wearing,” said Mark firmly, taking Andy by the shoulders and steering her toward Anna. Andy nodded, and Anna led her down the stairs into the locker room, tossing her one of her spare uniforms and an extra pair of boots.

“Wear that for now, and believe me, the instant we find him, I’ll make sure you’re out there,” promised Anna.

“Thanks Anna.” Andy shucked off the dress and pulled on the Elite Squad uniform, almost wishing she was part of their team. She followed Anna out to the patrols, and joined her, Kieran and Bex in one patrol, Daniel and Kenzie taking a second and Mark and Cass loading up a third. Kenzie’s patrol was first out of the garage, tires squealing as they exited, Kieran not far behind them, Mark and Cass bringing up the rear.

“How long do you think it’ll take us to get out there?” Asked Andy, legs jiggling in nervous energy.

“At normal speeds, around an hour. Given that we’re driving with lights and sirens and Kieran and Daniel are driving? Probably closer to forty minutes,” answered Bex.

“We’ll find him Andy; we won’t leave until we do,” promised Anna from the front seat.

“What if he hasn’t made it? What if we don’t find him in time?” Responded Andy.

“You can’t think like that. Stay positive; he has the rescue know-how to keep him safe, and I know it’s getting dark, but we can set up and be ready, and join the firies while they’re out as well,” answered Kieran.

“I haven’t even told him I loved him,” lamented Andy, glancing out the window as the countryside blurred past. Bex reached across, taking Andy’s hand in hers and giving it a quick squeeze.

“He knows babe. I promise he does.”
Liam leaned against a tree, the dark night making it hard to even see where he was going. He could smell the smoke behind him, and knew he needed to keep moving if he had a chance, and he knew his own survival chances were slim. He pushed on, sucking in a painful breath of air, forcing aching limbs to move, blood still dripping from various lacerations, Andy the only thought on his mind.

*He had to survive for Andy.*

Forty-five minutes later, the Elite team pulled up at the command centre just outside Faulconbridge in Hillcrest Avenue, a blonde firefighter clearly in charge and directing firefighters in dozens of directions. She glanced up at them, watching them approach.

“Mark Ramirez, Rescue Elite Squad,” spoke Mark, putting out his hand to shake the woman’s hand. She ignored it, instead staring at him intently.

“Annika Ehrenburg. What interest does Elite have in a bush fire?” She asked.

“We think it’s been cause by our chopper,” answered Mark.

“What was your chopper doing out here?” Demanded Annika.

“We’re not sure, but we’re hoping you could let your team know that we’re looking for a Liam Gordon; he’s our chopper pilot, and he’s been missing a while,” explained Mark. Annika nodded stiffly, pulling her radio off her shirt and speaking briskly into it, barking orders.

“Anything else?” She asked.

“We were hoping to join your teams as they work so we can keep an eye out for him ourselves,” hesitated Mark. Annika paused before shaking her head.

“I wish I could, but not during nightfall. However, in the morning, you are most welcome to join them,” decided Annika. Mark nodded, and glanced back at the team.

“Right, set up alongside Annika here and co-ordinate with her team; we want to know if they see anything, clothing, blood, a body, anything,” emphasised Mark. Daniel and Kieran headed to the back of the third patrol, pulling out the table and chairs for Cassie and Bex to use, setting them up quickly. Andy paced in the small centre, stress rolling off her in waves.

*They were in for a long night.*

Liam slid down the trunk of a tree, exhaustion winning over survival.

*He couldn’t stumble any further.*

*He couldn’t breathe.*

*Couldn’t think.*

*Andy.*

“The sun is up, can we please go?” Begged Andy.

“You’re not even allowed out with us! Why would you be begging to come?” Asked Mark.
“I’ll vouch for her, if you’re willing to bend the rules and let her come,” piped up Anna.

“Fine. Andy, Anna, head out with Jake Hudson. Kenzie, Daniel, follow Lisa Martin, and Kieran and I will head out to meet Jason Keel,” sighed Mark. Anna passed Andy a pack, shouldering her own and heading over to Jake, following his team out into the smoky bush.

“When did you get the fire out?” Asked Anna.

“Around four this morning. We’re still dousing hotspots, but shouldn’t be dousing for too much longer,” explained Jake, stepping over a fallen log.

“Are your teams staying to help look for Liam?” Asked Andy. Jake nodded.

“Yeah, something about your Head Office demanding we stay and finding their chopper. If it was in this, it was burnt to a crisp,” stated Jake bluntly. Andy stiffened, trying not to envision that possibility, and Anna laid a gentle hand on her shoulder, giving her a quick squeeze.

“We’ll find the helo, and then we’ll go from there, okay? Don’t think like that,” whispered Anna. Andy nodded, and they followed Jake for a few moments further, before he came to a stop, his partner glancing out through the hazy bush.

“What’s that over north?” He asked. Andy strained her eyes, trying to see what he was indicating, but saw nothing.

“I don’t see anything,” answered Anna.

“How could you not?!” Asked Jake. Anna and Andy looked at him like he was crazy, and followed him as he bush-bashed his way a few metres, coming to stop in front of a clearly burnt and mangled helicopter.

“This. How could you not see this?” Andy dropped to her knees in terror, unsure if Liam’s body was even in there.

“Please, God, don’t let him be in there,” begged Andy. Jake, Anna and Jake’s partner sifted through the wreckage carefully, checking for evidence of Liam and his fate. After a few moments, Jake spoke up.

“Some of this isn’t burnt, but it is crushed. I reckon it’s fallen through the trees and landed this way, and the fuel tank has exploded, starting the fire. There’s still some blood in the cabin, but not enough to say your boy was in the helo when it was on fire,” decided Jake. Andy exhaled in relief; he wasn’t in there.

“Well, that leaves us with less options; we’ll keep looking Anna, but I don’t think he’s here. He probably tried to outrun the fire,” explained Anna gently.

“Yeah, well, come on. We’ve got other areas to cover before we get to go home tonight.”

“He shouldn’t have caved for Andy.”

“I would have caved if it were for Anna and Kieran; Andy has fought long and hard to maintain this relationship with Liam, and she has a strong head on her shoulders Daniel. She’ll be fine, and once we find Liam, she can stop freaking out,” grumbled Kenzie.

“You’re just grumpy because you’re hungry,” teased Daniel.
“Hangry. Thanks Daniel. Did you ever think I was grumpy because someone snored all night in the tent?” Countered Kenzie.

“I don’t snore,” replied Daniel seriously.

“Like a freight train,” giggled Kenzie. She glanced around at the charred landscape, and sighed.

“What?”

“I feel like this is like trying to find a needle in a haystack; the chances of finding one guy in the midst of this smoke haze and bush just seems so unlikely,” answered Kenzie quietly.

“I know what you mean, but we’re doing this for Liam and Andy, remember?” Kenzie nodded.

“I know. Come on, let’s keep moving.” They trundled on further, the haze getting thicker, to the point where Kenzie and Daniel had to pull on BA’s.

“I don’t think he’d be out here in this, or at least, I don’t think he would have survived,” added Kenzie.

“Don’t think like that. You’re his team leader for crying out loud; he’s one of the best chopper pilots in Australia and has had extensive rescue training. He’s not an idiot, and he’d do everything in his power to survive. Stop thinking the worst for him, and keep looking.”

Liam could hear familiar voices, ones he couldn’t quite place, and forced himself up from his resting place. His head spun, stars popping up in front of his eyes, and he waited for them to pass before pressing on, his whole body screaming in agony as he walked, burnt skin rubbing against fabric, parched lips cracking as he tried to moisten them with his tongue, muscles in a state of fatigue he didn’t even know was possible. He followed the voices, trying to get closer to them, make sure he was found. As he neared them, his legs gave out, legs crushing a branch underneath their weight. It got the attention of the individuals, and he could hear shouting before he completely passed out, pain, heat and exhaustion causing him to slip into darkness.

Andy…

“I shouldn’t have let her come out here. I’m supposed to be in charge!” Exclaimed Mark, kicking a burnt log. Kieran was quiet, preferring to observe the landscape while Mark vented.

“We’re nearly at the eastern boundary, and then we’ll double back,” called Jason. Kieran nodded, glancing around before stepping around a particularly aggressive looking shrub.

“She’s going to become an emotional hindrance to us out here; what happens when we find Liam? I should have called Vince, asked him to keep her back with his lot,” muttered Mark vehemently. He kicked a rock, making it skitter across the ground before coming to a stop against Kieran’s boots.

“We’re supposed to be looking for Liam, not kicking rocks,” said Liam placidly. Mark sighed.

“I know, it’s just… Charlie’s struggling with Tyler, and I promised I’d be there today to go to a parent teacher interview, and instead I’m here, and I don’t begrudge that, it’s just…” Mark trailed off, rubbing his hand across the back of his neck. Kieran nodded.

“I understand. This job isn’t easy; my last team leader left her job because it was tearing her family
apart, and even though she loved Rescue, she loved her family just a little bit more. You’ve got to ask yourself if you and Charlie can make it and survive this,” answered Kieran.

“This is ridiculous! Liam! Call out if you can hear us!” Yelled Mark. Kieran stopped for a moment, Mark almost walking into the back of him.

“What is it?” Asked Mark. Kieran pointed out towards the north-west, towards a smokey figure trudging awkwardly towards them.

“Liam?” Called Kieran. He glanced up, finally noticing Mark and Kieran, and took a step, collapsing to the ground.

“Rescue Seven to all units, we have Liam! Located towards the eastern boundary; we’re going to need extra medical assistance fast,” radioed Mark. The two rescue workers sprinted for Liam, dropping their bags as they neared him.

“God, he’s a mess,” breathed Kieran. He looked up as Anna, Andy, Kenzie and Daniel came crashing through the bush, Annika and Jake hot on their heels. Anna took point, pushing Mark aside to check Liam over, pulling aside his Rescue jacket and cutting straight through the black shirt he was wearing underneath.

“He’s unconscious; we’re looking at a broken nose, facial swelling and burns, dislocated shoulder, one, two, three broken ribs, abdo firm with evidence of bruising, possible dislocated hip, dislocated patella, laceration down left outer calf, and I wouldn’t mind betting he’s got a serious concussion with possible bleeding on the brain. We need to get him out of here and to medical treatment fast; I can do some things to make him comfortable, but not a lot,” said Anna. She indicated at Andy to join her.

“Kenzie, Daniel, have you got the portable stoke stretcher handy?” Asked Mark.

“We grabbed it on the way past for you,” spoke Jake, handing the cumbersome item to Mark. Anna glanced at Andy.

“Hold his hand. He can probably hear you. Tell him everything you wanted him to know,” said Anna gently. Andy nodded as Anna worked briskly, covering lacerations in tape and gauze, splinting the dislocated joints to keep them steady.

“Liam. Please don’t leave me. I don’t think I can do this without you,” whispered Andy.

“An ambulance will meet us at Hillcrest; we’re about a ten minute walk from there. Think you can keep him alive til then?” Asked Annika. Anna nodded, not even looking up from Liam as she taped down gauze pads.

“Thanks for your help Annika. Let me know what the report says when you write it?” Asked Mark. Annika nodded.

“Sure thing. Good luck.” Annika and Jake left to resume their firefighting duties, leaving the Elite team to handle Liam.

“Grab the spine board; get ready to transfer him across,” ordered Anna, carefully slipping a spinal collar around Liam’s neck. Kieran and Mark brought it around as Kenzie, Daniel and Anna tipped Liam onto his side, mindful of his injuries. Mark and Kieran slid the spine board underneath Liam, and then watched as he was lowered down.

“Strap him down, and we’ll get him out of here,” decided Mark. Andy stepped away, allowing the
team in to help her boyfriend, worried she’d be more of a hindrance than of help. The team worked together seamlessly to transfer Liam and his spine board onto the stretcher, and each took a corner, leaving Anna free to watch Liam’s heart monitor as they started to move through the bush. They moved quickly and carefully, each step deliberately placed, and Andy walked behind them, worrying her sleeve between her teeth as they moved closer to help. It took close to ten minutes to get back to the edge of Hillcrest Avenue, where an ambulance was waiting for them.

_Liam’s heart started to skip._

“He’s crashing!” Called Anna. The two paramedics sprinted over, taking over as the Rescue team lowered Liam’s stretcher to the ground.

“No!” Screamed Andy. Kieran caught her before she could land a hand on him.

“Let them work,” he rumbled, pulling her tight against his chest.

“No, please, don’t let him die,” she sobbed, fighting briefly before giving in. Bex joined her, watching as Anna and the two paramedics shocked Liam’s body three times before his heart finally caught on.

“He’s back!” Called Anna. She helped the paramedics load Liam into the ambulance, settling him in the back.

“Please, let me go with them,” pleaded Andy.

“We’ll take you to the hospital, but they need to be able to work without you in the back,” explained Bex.

“What if he dies on the way there? What if I’m not there for him?” Cried Andy.

“He knows how much you love him, and he’s not going to die Andy. Okay? He’s not going to die,” assured Anna, joining them as the ambulance left. Andy nodded, feeling weak in the knees.

“You okay?” Asked Kieran. Andy shook her head, allowing her head to lean back against Kieran.

“What’s wrong?” Asked Anna. Andy answered by closing her eyes and fainting.

“Shit. She’s out,” said Bex. Kieran lifted her easily, her body limp.

“We’ll put her in out patrol and head out to Nepean Hospital; she can be checked out, and then we’ll be close to where Liam is,“ decided Anna. Bex ran ahead, unlocking the patrol and opening the back door. Kieran draped Andy on the back seat, and Bex climbed around the other side, helping to buckle her in.

“Cass, Mark, are you okay if we head over to Nepean Hospital? I’ll call and give you an update on Liam,” called Andy.

“Go, and take care of Andy!” Replied Cassie. Anna nodded and tucked herself back into the front passenger seat, and Kieran pulled them out of the tiny street.

“What’s our ETA?” Asked Bex.

“Bout twenty minutes, if not a little bit longer; school zones are active, and we can’t go through them too fast, even with lights and sirens,” answered Kieran, weaving through traffic before hitting
a school zone. Bex nodded, glancing across at Andy. She still had her eyes closed, her breathing was even, and Bex wondered about the toll of the stress this would have on her.

“Is she okay?” Asked Kieran, overtaking a small white sedan.

“She’s still out. She’s worried about Liam, just like we all are, and I know she’s new to this relationship, and she really cares for him,” answered Bex.

“They’re so adorable together. I wouldn’t have picked it, not in a million years, but she’s so happy,” added Anna.

“I just hope for her sake that Liam pulls through.”

“I want those scans done now!”

“Portable x-ray is coming down.”

“Anyone looked at that dislocation? Immobilise that leg; I don’t want it shifting any further.”

“Ortho consult is due in five minutes. Liz, page them again.”

“Possible flail injury in the chest; page Hunter from Cardiothoracics!”

“Burns unit are on their way.”

“Who’s rostered on from Burns?”

“Alright, bloods, group and hold, someone get a large bore IV in and find out where Orth, Cardio and Burns are, now!”

“Someone change the dressing on that leg and on the face, irrigate if possible.”

“Christ, if this guy makes it, I’ll do that ridiculous university talk that administration want me to do.”

“It’s been four hours. Why aren’t they telling us anything?”

“Stop pacing. They could still be working on him, or getting him settled in a room,” replied Anna.

“I need to know now!” Exclaimed Andy.

“Family of Liam Gordon?” Called a nurse. Andy stood up, Bex close behind her.

“We’ll wait out here. Keep us posted,” said Anna quietly.

“How is he?” Asked Andy, following the nurse through a double set of doors and into the lift.

“We’ve taken him to ICU, and the doctor up there will explain more,” answered the nurse, pressing the button for the third floor. Andy jiggled on the spot nervously, desperate for more information than the nurse was going to give her. The lift door opened and the nurse led them down the hall to a private room.

“Oh God,” breathed Andy.

“Doctor West will be in shortly.” The nurse left, and Andy sat down next to Liam’s bed.
“He’s a mess,” whispered Andy, a hand near her mouth.

“Hi, I’m Dr West, one of the doctors on call tonight for the trauma team. Liam’s doing really well, all things considered,” he started.

“What sort of recovery time are we looking at?” Asked Bex.

“The burns are superficial, and will heal in their own time. The stitches in the left leg will come out in seven to ten days, and should heal nicely. We’ve relocated the hip, patella and shoulder, and will keep them strapped and immobilised at the moment, and once he wakes up, we can start some gentle physiotherapy. We’ve done extensive scans of his abdomen, and there’s no evidence of internal bleeding. He does show some bruising, but it’s consistent with the helicopter restraints, and explains the three broken ribs. Our biggest concern right now is the head injury and concussion; we’ve taped the broken nose, but we are concerned about bleeding on the brain. He has a GCS of 5, with E2V1M2. He did have a score of one E(C)V(T)M1 when he came in, so he’s definitely improving,” added Dr West.

“So when will he wake up?” Asked Andy, reaching across and taking Liam’s hand carefully in hers.

“Unfortunately, we don’t know.”

Cassie returned to her office, weary after a late night out. Her desk phone rang, and she picked it up amidst her paperwork.

“Rescue Elite Squad, Cassandra Parkes speaking.”

“Where were you last night?” Cassie sighed, frustrated.

“Derek, I call you twice and left three messages, and then I organised a babysitter for them because I didn’t know if you’d pick them up!” Exclaimed Cassie.

“Well, I’m home now, and I expected you to be here, dropping Callum, Jansen and Charlie off,” replied Derek testily.

“I’ve only seen them twice since we divorced Derek, I’m entitled to more time. Charlie’s only two,” snapped Cassie.

“Well, as far as I’m concerned, they’re my boys, and you get very little say in what I do,” snarled Derek.

“They’re half mine Derek,” answered Cassie, frustrated.

“It doesn’t matter. I’m taking them with me,” replied Derek.

“What? I’m coming home right now, don’t do anything stupid,” said Cassie, scrabbling across her desk for her keys and handbag.

“Anything stupid? I don’t think you understand Cassandra. They are my boys, and I’ll be taking them,” decided Derek.

“No, not the boys, please,” pleaded Cassie. The phone cut out, and Cassie swore, sprinting out of her office and down the stairs. She got into her four-wheel drive and sped out of the building, leaving Daniel, Kenzie and Mark to wonder what was going on. She drove as fast as she legally
could, determined to try and beat Derek to the chase.

When she arrived at her house, the boys were gone.

Cassie dialled the police.

“Andy? I’ve told Anna and Kieran what’s going on, and they’re going to head back, and Anna will bring back some clothes for you later. Do you need anything?” Asked Bex quietly.

“I want Liam to be okay,” said Andy, eyes brimming in tears. Bex gave her a quick hug, holding her close.

“He’ll be fine. He’ll pull through this and joke about getting burgers with Daniel, or what cool new driving move he can learn from Kieran, or what the best date idea is for you. He will pull through this, and you two will be stronger for it,” reassured Bex. Andy nodded, watching as her boyfriend breathed evenly, still unconscious.

“He’s so careful with the chopper, I mean, he’s so anal about checking it. I’m surprised he would have gotten into trouble whilst flying,” commented Andy.

“Well, that will be something for the police to look at, but I do agree. He’s pretty methodical about checking everything, and he would have calculated exactly how much fuel would have been needed if he was going to make a quick sweep out to the Blue Mountains,” mused Bex.

“I need to call Mark,” said Andy, standing up. Bex followed her out of the ICU and down the lift, out into the fresh air. Kieran and Anna were just about to leave when they spotted Andy and Bex.

“Andy? What’s going on?” Asked Anna.

“I’ve got to talk to Mark. Anyone got his number handy?” Kieran handed over his phone, and Andy pressed Mark’s contact, switching the phone to speaker.

“Mark Ramirez speaking.”

“Mark, it’s Anna, Kieran, Andy and Bex. Andy wanted to talk to you,” said Anna hesitantly. Mark sighed, the sound crackling through the phone speaker.

“What is it Andy?”

“Liam had an amazing safety record, and was so strict about checking his helo before taking it out on a run. He wouldn’t have flown so off course if he even thought there might be an issue. So what went wrong?” Asked Andy.

“Huh. Let me get back to you on that one, but good thought. You are right though, he is meticulous,” replied Mark.

“Makes me wonder what really happened out there,” mused Kieran.

“How is Liam?” Asked Mark.

“He’s still unconscious at the moment, but they are hopeful. He’s going to be out of action for a little while as things heal, so you might want to look at a casual for a few weeks,” suggested Bex.

“Alright. I’ll get on it and call you back later. Talk soon.” Mark hung up, and Anna looked at Andy.
“I didn’t even think of that, but you’re right. He’s so particular about the chopper, and he checks it before and after flights, just in case, and he works with the maintenance team when they come out every six weeks,” recalled Anna.

“He’s like it with my car; he doesn’t want something to happen, and he likes to make sure I’m safe. He’d definitely be like that with the helo,” answered Andy. Kieran glanced at Anna before speaking.

“You up for another trip up the mountains?”

Annika Ehrenburg and Jake Hudson were busy trying to pack up their gear and rally up their teams before going home for the night when the Elite Squad patrol pulled up beside them.

“God, what now?” Muttered Jake.

“You guys heading out?” Asked Kieran, stepping out of the patrol.

“Hoping to, but then you lot showed up. What’s up?” Asked Annika.

“We wondered if you guys had found the chopper crash site at all?” Anna asked.

“We did, about two clicks that way,” answered Jake.

“It’s a bit of a singed mess, but it’s still there. Why?” Responded Annika.

“We want to take a look at it, see it for ourselves,” replied Bex. Annika looked at Jake before sighing, pulling out her GPS and kit.

“Jake, you take the troops home. This lot can drop me back when we’re finished out here,” decided Annika.

“Fine by me; see ya!” Jake got into the fire truck with the rest of the crews, and they pulled out of the tiny street, heading back to Sydney after aiding the local firies.

“Alright; you lot got your packs? We’ll head out now before it’s too dark. Shouldn’t take too long,” ordered Annika. Anna, Bex and Kieran pulled on their gear, and Anna grabbed the extra pack for herself. They followed Annika out, stepping carefully over the charred remains of bushes and fallen trees. The trek was quiet, each member of the group quiet. Before long, Annika was pulling them towards the right, to a bank of trees.

“This is where the chopper remains are. We think it landed in the trees and then fell, causing the explosion that started this fire,” explained Annika.

“Look at the scratches on the side, just along from the fuel tank,” pointed out Andy. She’d spent enough time with Liam to know exactly what the chopper was supposed to look like, and the scratches were not there when he’d checked it after the last flight.

“The tree maybe?” Suggested Annika.

“See, I would have thought that too, but they’re going the wrong way to be off the tree,” answered Anna.

“That would have been the main access point to the fuel tank,” added Kieran.

“So what does that mean for Liam?” Asked Anna.
“That he was probably sabotaged, and this is all a setup.”

Cassie sat on her front doorstep, tears falling down her cheeks as she realised that her ex-husband had taken her three boys, and they were gone. She didn’t even know where to start looking, who to even call, but she knew she had very little chance of getting Callum, Jansen and Charlie back.

The police had arrived quickly, and brought the forensics team with them to look for evidence, while two other officers had taken her statement. She’d muddled her way through, explaining the abuse she’d received from Derek over the years, and upon trying to get out, he’d threatened to take the kids. She stayed, long enough for Charlie to be born, then eighteen months down the track, had filed for divorce. Derek had complied easily, and Cassie knew she should have been worried then; it had been far to easy.

The last six months had been quiet, Derek and Cassie sharing the children between houses, before today. The one little act of her not being home had set him off, and she was terrified to think what would happen to her boys under the regime of Derek.

She’d rung the only person she could think of to help her, the person Charlie was named after; Charlie Ramirez.

“Charlie? It’s Cassie. Please, I need you.”

Charlie had been at home with Tyler, waiting for Mark to arrive home when her phone rang, vibrating across the counter.

“Can I get it Mummy?” Asked Tyler.

“Let Mummy get it. You keep watching for Daddy,” suggested Charlie. She frowned at the unfamiliar number before picking up.

“Hello, Charlie speaking.”


“Cass? What’s going on? Where are you?” Asked Charlie. She heard Mark unlock the front door, and walked over to greet him, giving him a brief kiss on the cheek.

“I’m at home. Derek’s taken the boys and the police don’t know where he is,” sobbed Cassie.

“I’m coming to get you now; pack a bag, and I’ll be there in ten minutes,” replied Charlie. She hung up on Cassie, turning to her husband.

“Who was that?” Asked Mark.

“Dinner is on the stove, Tyler needs help with his reading and spelling again, and I’m heading out to go get Cassie,” answered Charlie. She disappeared down the hall and returned with her handbag and keys.

“What’s wrong with Cassie?” Responded Mark.

“Derek’s taken the boys, and she doesn’t know where they are,” replied Charlie. She jogged out the front door and climbed into Mark’s four-wheel drive, reversing out of the driveway and down the street. She knew Cassie’s house was at least a suburb away, and she floored it, taking the main
road. She pulled into Cassie’s street and was flagged down by a cop. After a few minutes of explaining who she was, she was allowed through, and pulled into Cassie’s driveway, Cassie still planted on the front step, eyes rimmed red and cheeks tear-stained.

“Oh Cassie,” said Charlie softly.

“They’re gone. He’s taken them, and the police don’t know where they are and I’m so worried about them,” cried Cassie. Charlie helped her stand, and wrapped her arms around her.

“Come, pack a bag, and I’ll take you back to our place.”

Andy sat back next to Liam’s bed, Kieran, Anna and Bex having headed back to Sydney; one of them would pick her up later on. For now, she wanted to be close to Liam while he was in hospital, and short of a transfer, Nepean Hospital was where he would stay. Andy held Liam’s hand in hers, willing him to wake up.

“Liam. I don’t know how to say this, but I think I’ve fallen in love with you, and I don’t know how to turn back. I can’t lose you now, not when you mean so much to me, and not when I haven’t told you how much I love you. You are a beautiful, amazing man, someone who listens to me and cares for me, and I don’t know what I’m going to do if I lose you,” admitted Andy. She laid her head on the bed, allowing the tears to flow freely, her heart aching with the possibility of losing Liam. She stayed there for a while, trying to compose herself when she felt her hand being squeezed.

“Liam? Liam, open your eyes for me,” begged Andy, standing up to look at Liam’s face. She laid a gentle hand on Liam’s cheek as he struggled to open his eyes. He finally prised open the heavy lids on his dark blue eyes, and looked up at Andy’s face.

“I love you too,” he breathed. Andy broke down, tears falling fast as she smiled at her boyfriend.

“Oh God, you certainly know how to frighten a girl. Promise me you’ll be more careful next time; I don’t think my poor heart can take this again,” said Andy quietly. Liam smiled a little, mind still foggy, each thought slippery like a bar of soap.

“I promise. I love you so much.”

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