

Recovered Strength

Jane x Lisbon

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Kapitel 21: A Game For Two - Episode tag for "White as the Driven Snow" (6x15)

2. Sequel to Photo Finish

A Game For Two

It's late when she finally gets home. She's exhausted, but the relief she feels after the emotional rollercoaster of the past few days keeps her awake; and not even a long, hot bath can change it.

Afterwards she snuggles into a pair of sweatpants and a cozy, white pullover with a button border. Comfort clothes, matching the Chinese food that just has been delivered.

Lisbon hums quietly while she rummages through her kitchen cabinets. It's only when she coincidentally glances outside the window that she notices *it*.

"What the hell?!" She grabs her phone from the counter and presses speed dial number one.

He answers after the first ring. "Good evening, my dear!" Jane's voice is way too cheerful and innocent for her liking.

"Oh don't give me that, Jane! What is your Airstream doing in my backyard?!"

"Uhm, parking?"

"Yeah, I can see that! What I meant is, *why* is it parking in my backyard?"

"Because I drove it there," he explains patiently. Lisbon growls and stares at the well lit trailer with disbelief.

"*Why?*"

"Well, home is where the heart is, so I thought I could bring both of them together." The smirk in his voice indicates a joke, but Lisbon actually wonders how close it is to the truth.

"Yeah right," she scoffs while trying to ignore the pleasant flutter in her chest. "What are you doing here, Jane?"

"I...I just thought you might want some company. And I figured you would probably decline if I asked you to come over, because you're in no mood to go out tonight. So I

simply brought my home to yours. I mean, if that's not the spirit of mobile living, I don't know what is."

She's surprised and touched by his honest answer, which makes her smile softly. "Oh really?"

"Yeah..." he replies slowly and adds, "Also, if I indeed guessed wrong and you're not in the mood for company, I could easily stay close without bothering you."

Call her crazy, but Lisbon is pretty sure, she hears some actual worry in his words, and the plea not to refuse his invitation. She decides to test her theory by giving a non-committal noise as a response.

"Huh..."

"So...? You wanna come over?" His question is so hopeful that she can't possibly tantalize him longer than a few more seconds.

"I'll be there in five," she promises affectionately.

And it's indeed exactly five minutes later when she knocks at his door, with only a pair of boots added to her outfit and the Chinese food in her hands.

Jane tears the door open and beams at her. "Lisbon! How nice of you to come by! And completely unexpected too!" He ushers her in while taking the bags and handing her a glass of wine in exchange. Without his jacket, but with rolled up sleeves and a carefree expression, he looks homier than she's ever seen him, and it warms her from inside.

"Knock it off, Jane!" She chuckles, but then she blinks in surprise as she finds the table already set, with two plates, a candle and wine. "How did you know I would bring dinner?"

"Please! I've known you for twelve years. You're an open book to me." He winks at her and takes the boxes out of the plastic bag.

"...Did you see the delivery guy drive away?"

"That too."

She slaps his arm playfully. "You're so full of it!"

"But you love me anyway," he warbles as she sits down.

"Shut up and serve the food!"

xxx

Except for the low jazz music coming from the radio, they share the meal in peaceful silence, occasionally glancing and smiling at each other. With anyone else it might have been awkward, but for them it just feels natural, normal even, with a spark of excitement buzzing under the surface.

A spark that starts humming even louder after dinner. By settling on the couch next to the table and folding her legs comfortably beneath her, she complies with Jane's suggestion to make herself at home while he cleans up.

"So that's how you feel when you idly watch other people doing all the work?" Lisbon

grins and contently accepts her glass of wine, which he refilled on his way to the sink without being asked.

Jane answers with a grin of his own while washing the dishes. "I'm getting results anyway, isn't that all that matters?"

"I'm honestly not so sure about the balance of cost and benefit here."

"Meh, academic flimflam!"

She snorts and they keep bantering until he finishes his task. He offers her some more wine then and sits down on the chair across from her, watching the woman in front of him with contentment.

"Are you trying to get me drunk?" She snuggles further into the cushions and sips at her glass, all the while holding his gaze. He scrutinizes her closely, taking in her attire from head to toe, and smiles tenderly. She blushes slightly, but she can't bring herself to feel uncomfortable – despite the elephant with the size of a blue whale in the room. The last time they kept looking at each other like that, she ended up throwing herself at him and kissing him as if there were no tomorrow.

Her cheeks redden even more and the memory sends a sweet shiver down her spine. Jane raises an eyebrow and moves to get a blanket.

"Of course not, why would I?" is his delayed and mildly distracted reply as he unfolds the fabric over her lap. She doesn't tell him, that she isn't cold, since he probably is aware of it anyway. Instead she lets the subject drop, pulls the blanket tighter around her and gives the empty space beside her an inviting pat. He follows her lead without hesitation and sinks down on the cushion, close enough to let their knees touch.

Lisbon looks at him and shifts a bit to lean her shoulder against his while nervously fidgeting with her wine glass.

"Jane...?" She struggles. She really doesn't want to ask, but at the same time she needs to know.

"Hm?" His smile is warm and encouraging and tugs at her heart. When he reaches for one of her hands and holds it safely in his, she swallows.

"About...what happened the other night..."

"You mean, when you shamelessly jumped me and ruthlessly tried to seduce me?" He obviously attempts to lighten the mood and make it easier, which admittedly works just fine. She growls, flushing scarlet, and nudges his shoulder.

"Yeah, *that*!"

"What about it?" He becomes earnest, and so does she.

"Well...what does it mean? ... You know, for us?"

He looks into her eyes as if he's searching for something – she has no idea for what exactly – and starts playing gently with her fingers. "It can mean whatever we want."

"Come on, Jane, I'm serious. It's not that easy."

"So am I!" he says sincerely. "Why wouldn't it be easy?"

"Because..." She struggles again, confused by his soft caress and his calm posture.

"Because it's complicated!"

"No it's not. All I have to do is looking at you, my dear, and I just *know* that it's plain

simple. I know, what I feel for you. And I have a very good idea about what you feel for me – even if I can't be sure. It's all that counts! And even if I'm wrong – I truly hope, I'm not – that doesn't change a thing. We can do whatever we want. We will figure it out. Together."

Why does he sound so reasonable? She had so many arguments why *they* would be a bad idea, but now she seems to remember merely one of them.

"What if it goes wrong? What if...I lose you again, just because we make the wrong decision now?"

He tightens his grip around her hand and makes sure to hold her stare. "I promise you, Teresa, that you'll never lose me, not when I can help it! If that's what you want, I'll stay by your side till the very end."

"What is this, a proposal?" she tries to joke, but the laughter dies on her lips as he stays serious. She feels a lump forming in her throat.

"You meant what you said? You really mean that?" she whispers overwhelmed. Jane cracks a soft smile, probably feeling that she's about to freak out.

"I do. I know you're scared, but you don't have to. It's just *us*. Jane and Lisbon, as always. Just you and me. No more and no less." Someone might have understood his words the wrong way, but Lisbon finds them oddly reassuring and calming. And when he adds a dramatic, "It's us against the world, like superheroes!" she can't help but smile, feeling the tension decreasing.

"More like Tom and Jerry," she scoffs.

"Let me guess, I'm the cat that gets outsmarted by the mouse?" When she nods with a grin, he says, "Oh well, I don't mind the comparison. No matter how much they squabbled, Tom and Jerry were only happy when they were together. They couldn't live without each other, just like us."

Lisbon covers her laughter with a snort and leans her head against his shoulder, watching with a warm flurry in her chest how he starts to play with her fingers again. She wants to kiss him, wants to be as close to him as possible, but she feels shy of a sudden. Getting romantically involved with Jane has never been an option before, and now that it is, she doesn't know where to start.

Perhaps she just needs some time to get used to the idea.

She stifles a yawn. All the thinking, the cozy atmosphere combined with the wine in her veins and Jane's calming presence make her sleepy. The tender stroking on her fingers and along her arm does the rest, so she slowly dozes off. She hardly notices how Jane helps her laying down, before she finally falls asleep.

xxx

It can't be much later when she awakes, and it takes her a moment to realize why. There's a weight on her chest that makes it hard for her to breathe.

"Ugh, Jane..." she complains and reaches for his shoulder.

"What is it?" he murmurs sleepily. He's lying on top of her, with his face buried in her pullover and his back covered by the blanket. It's quiet in the Airstream and almost dark. The only light comes from a small lamp in the kitchenette. He must have decided to call it a night and simply joined her on the couch. Not that she minds in general, but she won't be able to sleep like that.

"Move, I can't breathe."

"Sorry." He shifts his weight off her and slides between her and the backrest, resting his body only partly on hers now. "Better?"

Lisbon inhales deeply and relaxes. "Yes!"

"Good," is all he says and then he places his head back into the sweet valley between her breasts, while his arms sneak around her body to hold her tight. It makes her both roll her eyes and chuckle.

"Having fun down there?"

"I can't complain." He sighs, very much pleased with the situation.

"I bet." She grumbles, but embraces him anyway, after she straightened the blanket around his shoulders. Without much thinking, she buries her fingers in his hair, playing with the golden curls like she's always wanted to, while her other hand starts stroking his back.

He makes another, rather purring sound and cuddles closer.

It makes her smile, but then a sudden thought cuts through her heart like a knife, killing the happy expression off in seconds.

She almost lost him today. And not only him, but Grace and Wayne as well. The fear is still lingering beneath the surface and it costs all her willpower to swallow it down. Her eyes become misty as she realizes how lucky they have been, and a wave of pure relief washing over her makes her lower lip quake.

Jane, who probably feels her body tensing, lifts his head and looks up at her.

"Hey, what's wrong?" he whispers with worry.

She blinks rapidly and stares at the Airstream ceiling. "Nothing...It's just..."

He carefully moves upwards to get a better look at her face and places his palm on her cheek. "Just what?"

"I'm just happy that you guys came out of this alive." She finally let their eyes meet and finds his filled with regret and affection.

When he replies, his voice is soft and honest. "I'm sorry I scared you. Please believe me that I am."

"You have to be more careful, Jane!" She urges him, her own voice thick with emotion.

"Especially now that we..." She breaks off and tightly shuts her eyes.

"Hey...Teresa, look at me." He flutters a peck onto the top her nose and waits for her to look at him once more. "I will be more careful in the future, okay? You're not getting rid of me that easily."

"Promise?" She isn't sure if she can believe him just yet, but she's willing to try.

"I promise." Hell, she doesn't have a choice anyway. Especially not when he looks at her like this and finally bends down to press a loving kiss on her lips. The touch is tender and yet driven by a long concealed hunger. And all her worries fade into the background when he plunders her mouth with longing and fervour.

After a more passionate interaction they exchange some more long and lazy kisses, until they break apart and he eventually nestles his head back against her chest. She only notices that he somehow opened the collar buttons of her pullover when he places another kiss on the inside of her breast.

She gasps and feels him chuckle against her skin.

"Stop this, Mister! We'll continue this when we're not emotionally and physically exhausted."

"Yes, ma'am!" He smirks. "But just so you know, I'll take you up on that."

XXX

When she awakes from her slumber anew, the bright morning sun glistens through the blinds. Something is lying on Lisbon's face and she grabs it a bit disorientated, before she looks around. Jane is gone and she tries not to be all too disappointed, until she remembers the paper in her hand.

She sits up and gazes at the back of a Polaroid photo, where a message has been noted down in Jane's neat handwriting.

Good morning my dear,

*I hope you slept well. Judging by the soft sighs you made in your sleep, you had some nice dreams at least. Nothing to be embarrassed about, I assure you.
I'm out to get us a delicious breakfast and I'll be back in a few.*

*Love,
Jane*

She rolls her eyes and turns the photo around.

"What the-?!" With her eyes as big as saucers she stares at the picture. It was obviously taken in the morning and it shows her own sleeping form and Jane with his head on her shoulder. While doing the victory sign, he beams into the camera with the smuggest grin she's ever seen. However, the most scandalous part of that scene is a bright hickey in her cleavage that hasn't been there before. Frantically she rips her open-buttoned pullover aside and *there it is*.

"Oh no, you didn't, Patrick Jane!" Lisbon hisses. It is nothing that couldn't be hidden by a high-necked blouse, but *how dare he?!*
She will make him pay for this! Dearly!

Her gory gaze falls on the camera that is sitting innocently on the table. So he likes taking pictures of her, yeah? *That can be arranged!*
It probably isn't what he had intended when he brought her this gift – or *maybe it is* exactly what he had hoped for. Either way, two can play this game!
*And she will make sure that **her** victory won't be a photo finish.*

The End