

The Nashes

By Kate Simon

Marina was champing at the bit for Frank to come home. It had been the first time he'd been away since the twins were born and the last three days were awful without him. Her mother had helped her during the day but she refused to let her stay over. She would not be completely dependent on her mother. The problem with that was she'd become dependent on her husband. He had an almost magic ability to calm their babies down. Anna could be a very demanding baby and she'd been screaming her lungs out for the last hour. Nothing she did would calm Anna down. Her crying had gotten Jonas wound up so she'd been listening to crying babies in stereo for an hour. She had the front door open before he put his car in park.

Frank couldn't wait to get home. He missed Marina but he had a tangible ache for his children. He needed to have those babies in his arms. He laughed to himself thinking of what his Marine buddies would think of the stoic Colonel Nash now. He'd been known for his attention to detail, especially to his uniforms. They were always perfectly pressed and spotless. Now half his clothes had baby puke stains and the other half smelled like baby powder. He smiled because he wouldn't have it any other way.

He walked in the door and found Marina waiting for him. His wife was one of the most beautiful women in the world and that wasn't just his opinion. Her looks had been praised on the covers of magazines all over the world. Now, she was standing before him in a wrinkled t shirt and shorts. Her long brown hair was gathered in a messy ponytail and she looked like she hadn't slept the entire time he was gone.

"Thank God," she whispered. She kissed him quickly and then pointed upstairs toward the sound of his crying children. "Go. Now."

He dropped his bags and went straight to the nursery. "What is going on in here?" The sound of his voice seemed to wind them up further, both yelling for their father's attention.

"You get Anna and sit."

Frank hadn't heard Marina come up from behind him. He picked up his daughter and sat in the rocker. "What is going on with you, young lady?" he asked his daughter in Russian. They had decided before the children were born that they would raise the

children speaking both Russian and English. When Anna heard her father's gravel filled voice her cries slowed. Marina set Jonas in his arms.

"Talk to them. They listen to you. They don't listen to me."

"Marina, they're six months old. They don't understand anything we say."

Marina's eyes narrowed. "Oh you think so? This is all your fault, you know."

Frank was now rocking both babies slowly. "How is this my fault?"

"I said Papa will be home soon and Anna started howling."

"Why is that my fault?"

"Anna is her Papa's girl. As soon as I said your name she wanted you and wanted you now." Marina's eyes welled. "I know how she feels," she whispered. She leaned over and took her son out of Frank's arms. He had quieted considerably while Anna was still fussing. "There, there. Is Mama's little man feeling better? I know your sister gets on your nerves. It's okay, angel." She rocked back and forth until she was sure Jonas was ready to go down for his nap. She set him in his crib and looked at Frank. "I'll be in our room."

Frank watched as Marina retreated into their bedroom. He looked down at his daughter who was now smiling at him. "What did you do to Mama, little one? You have to take it easier on her." Anna giggled and smiled and his heart leapt. He knew Marina was right. Anna was her Papa's girl.

Once he got Anna settled he went into their bedroom. Marina was sitting on the edge of the bed, wiping her eyes and blowing her nose. He sat down next to her and put his arm around her shoulder. "Talk to me."

"I feel like a failure."

"What? Why?"

"I couldn't manage three days without help with my own children."

"Sweetheart, first of all, you're a fantastic mother. That's not just me talking. My mother said so."

"She did?"

"She thinks you're amazing and so do I. Second, twins are tough for anyone. But our Anna, would level an entire Marine division."

Marina looked at him and smiled. "You think so too? It's not just me?"

"Hell no. That child knows what she wants and she's not satisfied until she gets it."

She's going to keep us on our toes forever."

"Jonas is such a good baby, so calm. How can they be so different?"

Frank smiled. "I think Jonas was God's little bonus to us. He knew Anna was going to be a handful so he gave us Jonas for balance. Maybe as he gets older he'll have a calming influence on his sister."

Marina smiled and then laughed. "Probably not," they said in unison.

"Okay, Papa's here. What would Mama like most right now?"

"Honestly, I'd love a hot shower and a long nap."

He kissed her forehead. "You do that." He turned off the baby monitor.

"Hey, what are you doing?" she asked.

"I've got the kids. Their door is closed and I'll have the portable monitor with me. Turn Mama Bear off for a while and let Marina have that shower and a nap."

She rubbed her hand up his chest. "But you've just gotten home and I've missed you."

He gave her a soft kiss. "I missed you too, babe. So much. But you need that nap and I'll be here when you wake up." He gave her another kiss. "I'm not going anywhere."

Frank was sitting in the living room reviewing his case report. His analysis of the Tomo Pharmaceutical campus was complete. Their systems were good, but hadn't been updated for years. He'd made his recommendations for upgrade of the technology and the retraining of the staff. He'd have Jerry take the classes. He wasn't going to be away from Marina and the kids again this soon. He looked up at the TV screen and his view of his sleeping children. It had been three hours and the children and Marina were still sleeping, apparently having worn themselves out.

"Hey there."

He looked up toward the stairs and saw Marina standing on the stairs looking more like herself. She was wearing her long terry robe and had brushed out her long brown hair. "Hi there. Did you have a good nap?"

She sat down next to him on the couch. "Great nap. I feel a lot better." She glanced at the screen. "They're still asleep?"

"Yeah, they've barely moved. I think they wore themselves out."

Marina slipped her arms around Frank's waist. "I'm sorry I was so nuts when you came home."

He gave her a quick kiss. "You have nothing to apologize for."

She nodded toward his laptop. "Are you done with your report?"

He gave her a sly smile. "I could be." He closed the laptop. "What do you have in mind?" She untied her robe and slipped his hand around her waist. He smiled when he realized she hadn't bothered with anything but the robe. "Umm." He leaned in and kissed her neck. "I missed you, babe."

"Oh yeah?" she said with a wicked grin. "Show me how much."

He pulled her close and gave her a deep kiss. Their tongues moved in a familiar dance.

"Mmmm, that's a start," she whispered. She stood and dropped her robe.

She always took his breath away. She was truly magnificent. Only he could see the slight changes in her body since giving birth. A softening of curves, slighter fullness in her breasts, nothing anyone but Frank would ever notice. She turned and walked back up the stairs as he got a great view of her ass.

He followed her up the stairs and closed the bedroom door behind him. He glanced at the TV screen to see the image of his children still sleeping peacefully. Marina approached him like a hunter stalking her prey. She yanked the t shirt from his jeans and pulled it over his head. She tossed his shirt on the floor while running her hands up his chest and down his arms.

"Ummm," she whispered. "I love your body." She placed kisses on his chest, working her way up toward his neck. She stopped and looked at him.

"What?" he asked.

"Am I that shallow? Am I doing to you what has been always done to me?"

"What do you mean, sweetheart?" he asked as he walked her toward the bed.

"When I look at you I'm looking at your chest, your arms," she smiled. "and your ass is spectacular." He stifled a laugh. "People have always looked at me for my parts. Am I doing that to you?"

Frank smiled and took her hand in his. "Sweetheart, you show me every day how much you love me. The fact that you find me physically attractive, well, I think of it as a

bonus, amusing, but a bonus."

Marina gave him a sly smile. "What do you mean amusing?"

"You're the only one who sees in me what you do."

She smiled and pushed him back on the bed and straddled his waist. "You think so?" She bent over and gave him a kiss. "You're wrong," she whispered. "Josiah, you look better in jeans and a t shirt than men half your age."

He cupped her ass in his hands. "If you say so." He rubbed his hands up her back and smiled. She sat up and stared at him. "Ah, babe, this engine is ready to roll. I need to get out of these jeans before I injure myself."

"I think I know why."

"Why what?" He held onto her hips and lifted. "Seriously, babe. The jeans."

Marina smiled and slid down his body, pushing his hands away. She unbuttoned his jeans and carefully pulled down the zipper. He was more than ready. She slipped his jeans and boxers off in one well practiced move. She squealed when he grabbed her under the arms and tossed her on the bed.

"Why what?" he repeated as he covered her with his body.

"Why you don't see it, the way women look at you." He stopped nibbling on her neck and looked her in the eyes. "It's because of the way you look at me. You don't really notice any woman but me, do you?"

He smiled. "Well, that girl at Starbucks is pretty cute."

"Smart ass," she said as she shoved at his shoulder. "Yes, she's very cute but you don't look at her the way you look at me." Frank gave her a soft kiss. "You're right. Once I met you, you became my focus," he said as he returned to nipping at her neck. "Speaking of focus, you have some very luscious parts I'd like to attend to, so if I may continue?"

"Oh yes, please do."

He pushed her toward the headboard and began his slow feast of his wife. At least he tried. Her skin was so warm and inviting and he couldn't wait any more. He slid inside her as he took full possession of her mouth. She locked her legs around his waist and thrust up, meeting his passion with her own.

"Oh God, babe," he growled as he thrust. He reached between them and stroked

her. She flew apart under him and he followed.

He had just about caught his breath when they heard crying on the monitor. They looked at the screen to see Anna demanding attention. He looked at Marina and smiled.

"Figures," they said together.

Marina set the out the lunch plates and checked on the chicken she'd made. She loved having her sister in law as a friend. Vasily's wife, Katherine was a sweet, easy going woman who was a perfect balance to her brother's hard driving personality. However, in her professional life Katherine was as tenacious as they came, which is why she'd hired her as her attorney. Marina hadn't worked in nearly two years but there were still legal matters that need to be attended to from her movies. Katherine was particularly vigilant on licensing issues with her science fiction franchise.

Jonas and Anna were still in their highchairs after she'd finished feeding them their lunch. "Jonas you are very messy. You know Aunt Katherine is coming soon. You want to look your best." She wiped Jonas chin and he smiled and giggled at his mother. She laughed and kissed his cheek. She couldn't help but think Frank was right. Jonas was such a sweet natured baby that he made his sister's antics a little easier to bare.

Marina greeted Katherine at the door. She noticed Katherine had changed into slacks and a cotton blouse. "Cute top. Learned from the last time, huh?"

"Yeah," she laughed. "Baby puke is hard to get out of silk." She walked over to the babies and smiled. "How are they doing?"

"Great. We are finally on a schedule with days and nights. Frank and I are managing to get some sleep."

"That's good." She reached into her briefcase and pulled out a small box. "I brought you something."

Marina smiled and sniffed the box. "Chocolate chip cookies from Rice's?"

Katherine laughed and shook her head. "Amazing. Have you ever considered a career in scent tracking?"

She smiled and put the box on the kitchen counter. "Not much call for tracking down outlaw pizzas"

Katherine handed her an envelope. She opened it and smiled. "Cookies and a check for two million dollars. You can come to lunch anytime." She tossed the check on the sideboard. "How did you get to Proctor to settle so fast?"

"I explained that they are a large manufacturing conglomerate that illegally used

the image of America's favorite actress to promote their sleazy lingerie."

Marina laughed. "Hah, America's favorite. They bought that?"

"God no. I also told them that you were a very wealthy woman who would use your unlimited resources to drag them through lengthy legal battle."

"And they caved."

"Not exactly."

"What exactly?"

Katherine smiled. "I told them you were my sister in law and I would devote one hundred percent of my time to destroying their company brick by brick."

"I bet that scared them."

Katherine blushed just a bit. "Apparently. They messengered me the settlement check an hour later."

After lunch Marina put the dishes away while Katherine had a chance to play with the babies.

"They're getting so big," she said.

"Yeah, I'm counting the days until they go to college," said Marina.

"No, you're not."

She smiled. "No I'm not." She picked up Anna while Katherine picked up Jonas. "I love my kids but they are exhausting. Frank is a great hands on father but when he's working it's all me."

"You could afford to hire help, the best help."

"No, I don't want to do that. Mama comes over a couple of times a week during the day. That gives me a few hours."

"Well, you might want to think about it again," said Katherine. She balanced Jonas on her lap while she opened her briefcase. She pulled out a bound folder and set it on the table. "Do you remember Stan Price?"

"Sure, nice guy despite the fact that he works for Arlene, my old agent."

"Used to. He's started his own firm."

"Really? Good for him."

"He knows I'm your sister in law so he brought this to me."

Marina opened the folder and saw it was a script to a very popular TV crime drama.

"A script?"

"Stan represents the writer. When he read it he said he could only see you in the part."

"Oh, I don't know. I've been off work for two years. I have the babies...."

"I read it. It's a great part and it's nothing like you've ever done before. It's only one episode, no more than eight days of filming."

"I don't know."

"Marina, I'm not bringing this to you as your attorney or your sister in law. I'm bringing this to you as a fan. You're a great actress. You worked hard to get where you are. I want to see you use your skills."

Marina looked at the script and smiled. It had been a long time since she'd read a script and she honestly missed it. "Okay, I'll read it. For Stan."

Katherine smiled and nodded. "Of course. For Stan." She stood up and grabbed a baby blanket from the playpen. She tossed it on the living room rug and set Jonas down on it. "Here, give me Anna. The kids and I will play in the living room. You read."

Marina quickly lost herself in the script. It was good, really good. Katherine was right. It was nothing like she'd ever done before which made it exciting. If this had been two years ago she'd have jumped at it but now she was married with six month old twins to consider. She walked into the living room and saw Katherine engrossed in entertaining Anna. Jonas was engrossed with his feet.

"So, what do you think?"

"You're right. It's a great script."

"What should I tell Stan?"

"Tell him I'll let him know. I have to talk to Frank about it."

Frank was glad he'd managed to get out of the office before five. He liked to get home in time to feed the kids their dinner. Of course at this point, dinner was various jars of pureed goo, but he enjoyed the time with his children.

"Diva, where are you?" He called as he tossed his keys on the sideboard. He saw the envelope from Katherine's law office and opened it. "What the...Diva!"

"What?! I was in the kitchen." Frank held up the check. "Oh, Procter settled." She gave him a quick kiss. "Dinner's almost ready."

"That's it? Dinner's ready. You do understand that finding a check for two million dollars laying around does not happen in the normal course of events."

Marina shrugged. "I guess so. I'm just glad they won't be using my face to sell their crap." He followed her back to the kitchen. "Do you want a beer?"

"Hell yes," he said as he sat at the kitchen table, still looking at the check. "What are you going to do with it?"

She grabbed a beer from the fridge and set it on the kitchen table. "I don't know. What do you want to do with it?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you. We're a team, remember?"

"Did you have any idea when you filed suit?"

"No, I just wanted them to stop using my face. I left the financial details up to Katherine."

"Well, that certainly worked out." Anna picked this moment to squeal for her father. "Yes, princess, I'm coming." He walked over to the playpen and picked her up. He gave her a kiss on the cheek and made a raspberry noise in her neck. He was rewarded with a giggle. "How about sticking in the kids trust fund?"

"Sounds good. You get the kids started on dinner and I'll set the table."

"That's it?"

"What Frank? You're losing me here. You said in trust for the kids, I said yes. I see no further issue." Anna squealed. "And your children are waiting for their dinner."

Frank sat Anna in her high chair and fixed the seat belt. "I'm sorry, sometimes I forget what circles you traveled in before me."

Marina turned from the stove and stared at him. "Franklin Nash."

"Uh oh," he whispered to his daughter.

"Do you think I somehow lowered myself when I married you?"

"Marina, your life now is very different from what it used to be."

"Thank God," she said firmly. She looked at her daughter. "Excuse us, Anna. Mama needs a word with Papa." She took his hands in his. "Franklin Nash you look around this

room, what do you see?"

"I see two babies who will give us about a minute more before they start hollering for their dinner."

"Exactly," she smiled. "Our life here is loud and chaotic and exciting. You know what my life was like before?"

He knew better than to give her the smart ass answer that was on his tongue. "Tell me." Her response stunned him.

"Lonely."

"What?"

"Frank, I was closed off from everyone. I lived in a bubble. The only people I had contact with were people who I paid or paid me." She looked around the room and smiled as Jonas started fussing for attention. She picked her son out of the playpen and kissed his cheek. Now I have everything I've ever wanted." She laughed and kissed her son again. "And a couple of things I didn't know I wanted. Frank, I love my life. I love you, our kids, our home. I am what is known as a happily married woman. You got that, Marine?"

Frank smiled as Jonas reached for him. He took his son and gave him a kiss and a raspberry to the neck. He was rewarded with another baby giggle. He looked at his wife and smiled. "Yes, ma'am."

"Good. Let's not have this conversation again. Now feed your children."

He secured his son in his highchair. "Yes ma'am. Never argue with your mother, Jonas. She's a very smart woman." Frank smiled when heard her behind him.

"Damn straight."

Frank put his feet up on the ottoman and his arm around Marina. He sipped his beer and smiled at his favorite TV show, watching his children sleep. "They went down pretty easy tonight."

Marina sipped her wine. "Katherine played with them for an hour. I think she wore them out."

"That was nice."

"She was keeping them occupied. She didn't just bring me the check. She brought me a script."

"Oh yeah? Was it any good?"

"Yeah it was. It's for LA Story."

"The TV crime show? I like that show."

"Do you remember Stan Price? He used to work for Arlene."

"Skinny guy, makes great coffee."

"That's him. He left Arlene and started his own management firm. He represents a writer who'd written this script for LA Story. Stan thought it would be a good role for me."

"What do you think?"

"I think it could be a great role for me. It's different from anything I've done in the past."

"So you should do it."

"It's not that easy. What about the kids?"

"How long is the shoot and where?"

"Eight days and LA."

"We can work out the logistics. I can work from home. We could also revisit the idea of getting some help."

"Are you sure?"

"Sweetheart, you are a terrific actress. You should do what you love."

"I am doing what I love."

He pulled her close and kissed the top of her head. "I love being with our kids too but they can't be the only things in our life. Look, I'm not going to tell you what to do. If you want to do this I'll back you. Just be honest with yourself. Do you want to do it?"

"Yes," she said quietly.

"Great. Make the calls, set it up."

"We better start looking for a nanny," she said with a smile. "Daytime, no live in."

"Got it. Now, I say it's time we take advantage of the quiet," he said, taking the wine glass from her hand.

"What do you have in mind?"

He gave her a long, slow kiss. "Patience, diva, patience," he whispered as he took her hand and walked upstairs to their bedroom.

Frank sat down at the rough table in the Boozefighters club house. Marina had insisted he ride with Cabe today reminding him that being a father shouldn't be the only thing in his life. He had planned on taking care of the kids so she could spend the day with her friends. He smiled to himself. Damn the woman, using his own words against him.

"How are the kids doing?" asked Cabe.

"They're good. Keeping us on our toes."

"I can't even imagine," he smiled.

"Actually, we're trying to find a nanny. Marina is filming in a couple of weeks and I want to make sure someone's in place before that."

Cabe grabbed a couple of sodas and sat back down. "That's great. What's the movie?"

"It's not a movie, It's an episode of LA Story."

"Kate and I watch that. It's good."

"Yeah, we like it too. It's just one episode, an eight day shoot. Marina likes the part and thought it would be a good way to dip her toe back into the water."

"Is she nervous about going back to work?"

"A little, I think. More nervous about leaving the kids. I'm having a hell of a time finding anyone that will satisfy both of us."

"Translation, nobody has survived your vetting process."

Frank shrugged. "I'm not leaving my kids with someone I don't trust."

Cabe smiled. "No, I get it. I'd be doing the same thing. It will be good for Marina to get back to work. She's a great actress. I really liked those sci-fi movies she did."

Frank smiled. "You like sci-fi?"

"Kate got me into it."

Frank looked down at his beeping phone and saw Marina's picture. "What's up babe?" he asked as he heard his daughter howling in the background.

"Need you ask?" She started off the conversation in Russian. Never a good sign.

He looked around at his biker buddies sitting within earshot and decided Russian

might not be a bad idea. "What's going on?"

"Your daughter will not stop crying. I've tried everything."

"Why is she my daughter when she's like this and your daughter when she's quiet?"

"Just talk to her."

"I told you I'd stay home. You're the one who told me to go riding." "Josiah, do not mess with me. Talk to your daughter."

Frank held the phone away from his ear as Anna's cries came blasting through his phone's speaker. His buddies all looked his way and he gave them a shrug. He continued speaking in Russian, knowing it was more the tone of his voice than the actual words that calmed his daughter. "Anna. Princess, listen to Papa. Princess, Papa will be home very soon. Please give Mama a break and settle down. Papa loves you, princess." He smiled when he heard her cries lessen. "That's it, angel," he said. "Papa will be home soon." Marina came back on the line.

"When will you be home?" she said quietly.

"About an hour."

"Okay, see you then."

"I love you, angel."

"Yeah, I love you too. I'd love you more if you make it home in forty five minutes."

"I'll do my best." He smiled as he disconnected the call.

He looked over at his buddies who were snickering. Mike, the club president, looked at him and smiled.

"I take it your princess wants her daddy home now."

"You speak Russian?" asked Frank.

"Yeah. My wife is Russian. She and her parents came over after the wall came down. We met in college and got married after we graduated from law school. How old are your kids now?"

"Six months."

"I remember those days. It's tough enough with one, let alone two."

"Right now we're trying to find a nanny to help out, just during the day but I'm having a hell of a time."

"My daughter Sara might be interested. She's been trying to get a job as a teacher

since she got out of college but no luck. She's working as a waitress now and hates it."

"What kind of teacher?"

"She was an early childhood ED major. She wants kindergarten or first grade."

"Do you think she'd want to take care of my kids?"

"I could ask her."

"You know I would have to run a check on her."

"Yeah, that's not a problem. She's a good kid. She's never been a problem."

Frank smiled. "You're proud of her."

Mike blushed a bit at the emotion. "Yeah. She's stubborn, like her mother. I told her I'd support her until she found a teaching job but she insists on standing on her own." He pulled out his phone. "I'll call her. She doesn't start work until dinner shift."

Frank was getting cautiously optimistic as he listened to Mike talk to her daughter. Mike was a good guy, someone he trusted. His daughter was probably a good kid.

Mike looked up from his phone. "She's very interested. She could meet with you tomorrow. She off on Sunday's."

"That would be great. One o'clock?"

Mike relayed the message and he nodded. He disconnected the call and stuck his phone in his pocket. "She'll see you tomorrow."

"That's great. I'll give you the address." Frank pulled up Mike's contact information in his phone and text him the address. "Hey Mike, does Sara by any chance speak Russian?"

"Oh yeah, she fluent. Her mom raised her bilingual."

Frank thought if this worked out he would owe God big time for this particular miracle.

Frank looked at the screen of his laptop reviewing the displayed report for what felt like the tenth time.

"Are you sure she's okay?" asked Marina

"Sweetheart, I vetted the hell out of her. I checked her, her mother and Mike. The whole family is squeaky clean. Mike and his wife Mila are both attorneys with excellent

reputations. Sara went to school on a full scholarship. No police record, not so much as a parking ticket." Frank felt a little guilty about investigating his friend, but only a little. He'd have vetted Mother Theresa if she wanted to take care of his children.

"If you're sure."

Frank stood and took Marina by the shoulders. "I wouldn't let anyone be alone with our kids if I wasn't one hundred percent sure. You know that."

"Of course I do," she smiled. "I'm just nervous. They've never been alone with anyone but family."

"Let's not jump the gun. We'll meet her first, then decide." He heard a knock at the door and glanced at his watch. "Right on time." He opened the front door to Sara Williams. She was a petite blonde about five foot three, with blue eyes and a bright smile. Frank got a cheerleader vibe from her.

"Hi, Mr. Nash. I'm Sara," she said brightly.

Yep, definite cheerleader. He extended his hand to the young girl. "It's nice to meet you, Sara. Your father told me a lot about you."

"Oh, you know dads, they brag."

"Come in, this is my wife, Marina."

Marina extended her hand to the girl who now stood frozen in his living room. "Let me guess, your father didn't warn you." Sara only shook her head no. Marina looked at Frank. "See what happens when you don't give a person some warning."

Sara shook herself from her stupor. "Excuse me?"

Marina smiled. "Inside joke. Come with me." She led the girl to the couch and took a seat next to her. "Tell me about your studies." The young girl brightened as she described her studies and her student teaching experiences. She also interned in a day care where she took care of infants.

"Our children are six months old. How do you think you'll do handling twins?" asked Frank.

"I took care of more than two infants at once at the day care. I'll admit that was a couple of years ago but I doubt your children are any tougher to handle."

Frank looked at Marina and smiled. "You haven't met Anna."

"If you like I could work with you for a few days until you're sure I can handle the

job. If I were you I wouldn't want just anyone handling my kids, even if she is the daughter of a buddy."

"I understand you speak Russian," said Marina.

Sara slipped directly into speaking Russian. "Yes, my mother raised me bilingual. I only really get to speak it at home. When I was away at school I'd call home just so I could speak it with my family. I miss it when I don't speak it for long periods."

Marina smiled. "Me too. That's usually when I call my brothers."

"I would like to talk about money. I'm working full time so I would need to replace that income."

"It wouldn't be an every day job most weeks," said Frank.

"Oh," said Sara. "Well I..."

"But we would pay you a salary. Some days might be longer than eight hours if both of us are working. On days when we are not working you'd have the day off. We would give you a schedule at least a week in advance."

"Oh," Sara smiled.

"Technically you'd be an employee of my security firm. The job pays forty five thousand plus medical after thirty days."

"Wow, yeah..." she stammered. "That works for me."

"There is one thing you have to understand. Security and privacy are paramount. You'll be given a list of people, mostly family who would be permitted in the house when we're not here. No one, under any circumstances, is permitted to have access to the house or our children without being approved by me or my wife."

"Of course. I understand."

"We live a very normal life here, except for what I do for a living," said Marina. "I would prefer you keep a low profile about us."

"As far as the world is concerned I would be working for Mr. and Mrs. Nash."

Anna picked her moment to announce herself. "That would be Anna," said Marina. Cries in stereo now came through the monitor. "And that would be Jonas. You might as well meet them now."

Sara followed Frank and Marina into the large nursery. Anna was in rare form, howling her displeasure. Sara leaned over Anna's crib and smiled. "I assume you speak

Russian to them." Marina nodded. "May I?" she asked.

"Go for it," said Marina.

Sara picked up the crying baby and smiled. "What is all this fuss about, Miss Anna," she said. Anna's cries slowed, confused at the sight of this new person. "You've upset your brother, just look at him." She held Anna closer to Jonas who had settled in his father's arms. She looked at Anna and said, "See that, Jonas feels better now. Hello Master Jonas, I'm Miss Sara. It's very nice to meet you." Jonas looked at her like she was some great mystery. Anna cries were slowing to a mild fussing. "Miss Anna, I'm Miss Sara and it's very nice to meet you too. I hope we can be great friends." Anna stopped crying and made a grab for Sara's nose. Sara made a playful attempt to grab Anna's small fist in her mouth. Anna giggled.

Marina and Frank looked at each other, dumbfounded. They looked back at Sara. "You're hired," they said together.

Marina reviewed her script one last time before going on set. Sara had worked out better than they'd hoped. She was sweet and kind to the children, always on time and best of all could handle Anna. She looked in the mirror and touched up her lipstick. The shoot was going well and the children were fine. So why wasn't she happier about it?

"You're being ridiculous," she said to her reflection. She should be getting out by five today. TV shoots worked at a much faster pace than movies. This director was particularly effective with his schedule. He knew what he was doing and how to get it down on time.

Frank was going to pick her up from the set so they could go out to dinner. They'd decided to take advantage of the rare opportunity to have dinner without the children.

She closed her eyes and focused on her character. She was playing Alexandra, the wife of a Russian mob boss. It was an opportunity to speak Russian on screen, which she'd never done before. She looked in the mirror and smiled. She wasn't looking at Marina, she was looking at Alexandra. A knock at her trailer door brought her out of her musings.

"Yes? Come in,"

The set intern, Sam, stuck his head in the door. "Ms. Sokolov, they're ready for you on set."

"I'm ready for them." She stood, walked down the steps of her trailer and shut the door. "Sam, would you please check that security has my husband's information."

Sam smiled. "I already did. Colonel Nash has been cleared for the lot."

Marina gave the young man her best movie star smile. "Thank you, Sam. I really appreciate that." She hated when people treated Frank like he was an extension of her. Referring to him as Colonel Nash showed respect.

Frank sat in the Marina's trailer flipping through channels on the big screen TV. The portable dressing room was bigger and better equipped than most of the apartments he'd ever had. Then again the house he had now was the first time he'd ever put down real roots. Now he shared it with his wife and children. He picked up his phone and tapped

the icon for Sara. She answered on the first ring.

"Hey Mr. Nash."

"How's it going?"

"Just fine. The kids are having their dinner right now. Then it's bath time."

"You're okay with staying later tonight?"

"It's no problem. Take your time."

"Thanks Sara. We really appreciate you being flexible."

"You're welcome."

He hung up the phone just as the door to the trailer open. His heart stopped. Marina's cheek had a large bruise with a cut in the center. Her hair was a mess and her dress was torn. He jumped to his feet. "What the hell happened?"

Marina smiled. "Calm down, it's makeup."

"What?"

She reached up and pulled the prosthetic bruise from her cheek. "Movie magic." She walked toward him and slipped her arms around his waist. "I'm fine. I just want to take a quick shower before we go." She gave him a kiss before she sat down at her dressing table and started to remove the rest of make up. "Have you checked in at home?"

"Yeah, just now. Sara said everything is fine. The kids are having their dinner."

Marina's hand hesitated. "That's good." She continued wiping off the heavy makeup but Frank could see her quivering chin.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she said without conviction.

Frank sat down next to her and took the cloth from her hand. He slipped into Russian. It was how they were most honest with each other. "Talk to me. Telling me what's wrong."

"Nothing. Everything's fine. The kids are fine...without me." A tear slipped down her cheek.

"Oh sweetheart, are you worried about the kids being with Sara?"

"No. She's perfect. She can teach them Russian, she can handle Anna when I can't." Marina started to cry. "I know I'm being foolish but I can't help it. I feel like they don't need me," she grabbed her breasts. "Except for these."

Frank knew better than to smile or give a smart ass answer. "Sweetheart, they need you for more than breastfeeding. Your children love you."

"They love Sara."

"Yes, I'm sure they do but not how they love you. I guarantee it." He pulled out his phone. "Just so you know, Sara's not exactly perfect."

"What do you mean?" she asked through her sobs.

"I have the security cams on my phone. This way I can check in on Sara and the kids without calling. I've downloaded some clips."

"There's nothing wrong, is there?" she asked a bit panicked.

"God, no. If I'd seen an issue I'd have been on it right away." He pulled up a clip on his phone. "Here, watch this. It's from yesterday." He hit play and they watched a video of Sara walking up and down their hallway with a crying Anna. She was singing a Russian lullaby to her without results.

"Anna, angel, what is it? I've tried everything tonight and you're not having it. You have to give me a hint, sweet girl. You're fed, you're dry, you should be tired. What's going on? What would your Mama do?"

With that, Anna howled.

"Oh sweetie, is that it? You want your Mama? Well don't you worry. She'll be home soon."

Anna wasn't having it. Sara looked stressed for a moment and then smiled. The clip then moved to the living room where Sara opened the drawer of the entertainment center and pulled out a DVD. She set it to play and sat with still crying baby. Sara cranked the sound on the TV and it was then Marina realized it was one of her movies. She heard her voice come through the speakers and watched as Anna began to settle. Sara rocked Anna for a few minutes while the sound of her movie blasted. Anna was asleep five minutes later. Frank shut off the video.

"You see. She loves you. She may not be able to show it yet, but she does."

Marina smiled through her tears. "Let's go home."

"No."

"What? I want to see my babies."

"Of course you do, so do I. The kids aren't going down for the night for another

couple of hours. We are going to Dominick's and have date night, like a real couple. Just you and me for an hour. You'll have some wine and we'll relax and talk about something other than the kids." He gave her a soft kiss.

"But..."

"I tell you what we'll have dinner and get the Death By Chocolate to go."

Marina smiled. "Deal."

They had managed to have a great dinner at Dominick's. Marina had a glass of wine and they talked about their days. As much as they enjoyed date night, they both couldn't wait to get back to their children. Marina smiled at the large cake box Frank was carrying. Most people take home one slice of cake. Marina quite literally took the whole cake. They opened the door to the sound of crying babies.

"Sara?" called Marina.

The young girl came into the living room from the kitchen. "Oh, Mrs. Nash, I'm glad your home. Anna just won't settle down and of course that winds Jonas up." The poor girl looked like Marina did after a long day with her demanding daughter. She put her hands out to take Anna from Sara's hands. "Come here, angel. What's wrong?" Frank set the cake down and picked up Jonas from the playpen.

"I'm so sorry. Everything that usually works didn't tonight."

"Don't worry, Sara. It happens," said Frank

Marina gave her daughter a kiss. "Mama's here," she whispered.

"I really am sorry, Mrs. Nash. Things usually go better than this."

"Sara, don't worry. We both think you're doing a wonderful job," said Marina.

"You do?"

"Absolutely. Tonight is just one rough night. My shoot is finished. Take tomorrow off and enjoy a long weekend. Frank and I are going to spend the weekend with our kids."

"We'll see you Monday," said Frank.

Marina sat in the nursery rocker and hummed a lullaby to her baby girl. It didn't take long before Anna was fast asleep.

"Jonas is out cold," said Frank as he walked into nursery. He kissed his son's cheek

before he setting him down in his crib.

"So is Anna," Marina whispered. She kissed her baby girl before setting her in her crib.

Frank took Marina by the hand and led her out of the nursery. They walked into their bedroom and turned on the baby monitor. Marina reached for the remote to turn on the TV screen but he stopped her.

"Not tonight. Audio only." He pulled her close and gave her a deep kiss. "Mmmm. That was a good wine," he smiled.

"You could have had some."

"You know my rule, armed, driving and alcohol is a bad combination."

Marina smiled as she slid her hands up his back. "I know. I'm sorry I was so crazy earlier."

"You weren't crazy. But you feel better now, don't you?"

"Yeah. I guess my babies need me for more than my boobs."

"Yes they do," he said as he began to unbutton her blouse. "But they are spectacular boobs."

"Oh yeah?" she smiled. She loved the look on his face. After nearly two years together he still looked like a kid at Christmas when her looked at her body. She put her hand to his cheek and saw it all in his beautiful blue eyes, the love, the compassion, the loyalty. He would always be there for her, to boost her up on nights like this when her confidence lagged. And she would always be there for him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I love you so much, Josiah. Sometimes it just takes my breath away."

"I love you too," he whispered as he gave her a soft kiss. He moved only a breath away from her lips and said. "Now can I get back to your boobs?"

"Please do," she laughed.

Marina pulled a simple blue sheath dress from her closet and a pair simple black heels. It had been what seemed like forever since she'd done publicity but she'd promised the network she'd do it. They'd moved her episode of LA Story up in the rotation to fall during the February sweeps. The producers thought her return to acting would generate high ratings. The higher the ratings the more they could charge advertisers.

"You almost ready?" asked Frank as he walked into bedroom.

She looked at his reflection in the mirror and smiled. He was wearing a black t shirt and his favorite pair of worn jeans. It was her favorite pair too. Stretched between his shoulders were his holster and gun. It might be a stereotype for her to find this image of him so arousing, but damn if she didn't. "Yeah, almost. Where are you off to today?"

"I'm coming with you."

"What? I thought you had a meeting with a client."

"I had Jerry take it. I'm your chauffeur today."

"My armed chauffer. Is there a problem you're not telling me about?"

"Babe, you haven't been out like this for almost two years. They've been hawking your appearance for a week. Chances are paparazzi will be hot on your trail. I want to make sure nothing gets out of hand."

"Fine," she sighed.

"Everyone will think your husband waiting in the wings is perfectly normal."

"I know you're right it's just being at home, changing diapers and cooking dinners, it's all so normal." She pointed out the window. "Out there is definitely not normal."

He slipped his arms around her and nipped at her shoulder. "Am I part of normal?"

She laughed. "No. You're extraordinary."

"Oh I am, am I? Well you're pretty extraordinary yourself, diva," he said as he nipped at her ear.

"Josiah, you're revving my engine to distract me from all the crazy out there."

He gave her a sly smile that always made her turn into a molten chocolate lava cake. "Is it working?" he whispered.

"You know it is, goon." Marina looked at him and smiled. Two can play this game.

"It's working as well as this will." she whispered. She leaned in close and whispered into his ear several graphic details of what she was going to do to him when they got home. His tightening grip on her arms told her she was right.

"Damn, diva. How am I suppose to think straight now?"

She looked at his now much tighter jeans and smiled. "Or walk straight for that matter." She picked up her purse and headed toward the door. He gave her a quick slap to the ass.

"You'll pay for this, diva."

Marina laughed. "I'm counting on it."

"On the Town" was network daytime talk show hosted by four women. The women were a group of actors, comedians and news people, one of whom had appeared in a movie with her. The tone of the show was a bit more tabloid than she would have liked but it was on the same network as LA Story so she agreed. One of the producers, a thin young man with glasses, showed her and Frank to the green room.

"It will be about thirty minutes into the show when I'll come back for you, Ms. Sokolov."

"Thank you," she smiled although she was already annoyed. The producer hadn't even acknowledged Frank's presence. "You want a soda," she asked as she looked in the mini fridge.

"No, I'm good. You can tell me what's bugging you."

Sometimes it was a pain in the ass that her knew her so well. "That pencil necked dweeb totally ignored you. You were standing right next to him."

"Sweetheart, he probably assumes I'm security. I'm always ignored when I'm on the job. It's actually an advantage."

"How's that?"

"When people ignore me I can better observe them."

There was a knock at the door and a young Asian girl stuck her head in the door. "Ms. Sokolov, I'm Kim from makeup."

"Come in, please."

The young girl spotted Frank and gave him a big smile. "Oh, hello. You're Colonel Nash."

"Yes, I am." He smiled at the girl who promptly blushed and giggled. She looked at Marina and gasped.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Ms. Sokolov. It's just that your husband is so..."

Marina put her hand on the girl's arm. "It's fine." She turned toward Frank and smiled. "You have excellent taste, Kim."

Marina stood in the wings waiting for her introduction. She didn't know why she was so nervous. She dozens of talk shows before. That was the key, before. Before she was married, before she had two children, before all that crap with Peter Kane. She glanced up and saw Frank standing off camera but within her sight line. He gave her a bone melting smile and a wink and she forgot all her nerves. All she could think about was how she was going to make good on the promises she whispered in his ear.

"Please welcome Marina Sokolov."

Marina startled at the mention of her name and walked out on the set waving to the standing crowd. She was more than a little surprised at the prolonged ovation. She quickly greeted the hosts and sat down despite the still standing crowd. "Wow," she said to the host next to her.

"They're happy to see you," she replied. Elaine Jensen was a wickedly brilliant comic who'd been making a splash lately as an actress. "Welcome to 'On the Town'," said Elaine loudly enough to get the audience seated.

"Thank you for such a warm welcome."

"It's been quite a while since we've seen you," said Claire Montgomery, a too thin model who fancied herself a style guru.

"Well, I've been a little busy."

"Yes you have," said Claire as one of their wedding pictures flashed on a giant screen. She was startled but it was one that had been publicly released. "Your dress is magnificent, Alfonso, isn't it?"

"Thank you. Yes, Alfonso did a wonderful job on all the gowns for our day."

"Your husband looks very dashing in his uniform," said Elaine with a smile.

Marina stared at the pictured and smiled. "He certainly does." Marina looked at her and smiled. She liked this woman.

Elaine pointed off camera and waved. "Hello Colonel."

Frank smiled and gave a little wave when a camera was pointed in his direction.

"Your wedding was a little unusual. You weren't the only couple who got married," said Marilyn Carey, a print reporter turned broadcaster.

"Yes, it was. Both of my brothers and I got engaged at the same time so we all got married together." Marina saw another picture flash on the monitor. It was all three couples. Again it was a picture that had been previously released. "It was a very special day. I felt blessed to be able to share the day with my brothers."

"Your brothers married some very prominent women," said Jeannette Montrose. She had been a network broadcaster who always treated each interview like she was grilling a suspect.

Marina narrowed her eyes at the woman. "They married the women they love. I love them too. They have both become my true sisters." She didn't give the woman a chance to follow up by pointing to the picture. "On the left is my brother Vasily and his wife Katherine Davenport. Katherine and Val are both attorneys. Then there's me and Frank, and my brother Jacob and his wife Michaela Turner. Michaela is a brilliant jewelry designer. Jake is a Major in the Marines."

"Is that how you met your husband?" asked Elaine.

"It is. They were stationed together."

"The trial of Peter Kane is coming up soon. It was quite a dramatic story," said Jeanette.

Marina's first impulse was to walk off the set. Actually her first impulse was to deck her and then walk off. The producers had been briefed that she would not discuss the case under any circumstances. "That is an ongoing legal matter and I will not be commenting on it."

"You recently had twins," said Jeanette. Apparently Marina's death glare was enough to get the woman to shift gears.

"We did," said Marina, not sure where this woman was going with this. A picture flashed up on the screen of Marina holding Anna and Frank holding Jonas. They were all

dressed in white shirts and light khaki slacks, including the babies. It was a shot they'd done for People Magazine as a favor to Jimmy Collins. She'd thought it would be a quick one page article but the photo made the cover.

"It must have been difficult for you having children," said Jeanette as a fact rather than a question.

Marina tried to smile. "No more difficult than any other woman having twins."

"Oh look, your son has his father's chin," said Elaine, diverting the discussion.

Marina beamed. "Yes he does. He's going to be just as handsome as his father."

"We need to go to commercial, but when we come back we'll talk to Marina about her appearance on tonight's episode of LA Story," said Elaine.

"And we're clear," said the director.

Marina leaned over to Elaine and covered her mike in case it was still hot. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," she said. "And don't worry about the mikes. They learned their lesson early on not to leave them hot during commercial breaks. Jeanette thinks she's still thinks she's going to get another news anchor job."

"I see. Well I appreciate you keeping the conversation pleasant."

"Thirty seconds," called the director. Marina straightened in her chair and smiled. "And three, two," the director pointed to Elaine as the crowd applauded.

"We are here with Marina Sokolov talking about her appearance tonight on LA Story. What can you tell us about the clip we're going to see?"

"I play the wife of a Russian mobster who is not pleased when she finds out her husband is cheating on her."

"Okay, let's take a look at a scene from tonight's LA Story." Much to everyone's surprise, the scene was entirely in Russian with English subtitles. Marina was the put upon wife who was in a heated argument with her husband. The argument stopped when the other actor hit her and knocked her to the ground. Marina saw Frank flinch and then look back at her. She smiled and winked at him.

"Wow," said Elaine over the applause. "That looks intense."

"Did you learn your dialogue phonetically?" asked Jeanette.

Marina smiled and switched to Russian. "I didn't need to, I grew up speaking

Russian. But if you'd done your homework you'd know that." She heard Frank stifle a laugh. Okay, so maybe it wasn't the smartest thing to say on live television but she was getting pissed at this woman. She switched back to English. "I'm first generation American. I grew up bilingual."

"Marina, we're almost out of time but I want to thank you for being here with us," said Elaine.

"Thank you for having me."

"Before we go we have a little something for you." The pencil necked dweeb brought out a large basket filled with baby clothes and toys.

"Oh, thank you. This is so nice of you," she said.

"Thank you for being here," Elaine replied and then faced the camera. "That's all for today. We'll see you tomorrow, On the Town."

"And we're clear," said the director.

Marina stood and pulled off her mike. Jeanette gathered her things and stormed off the set. The other two women walked off together.

"What did you say to her?" asked Elaine.

"I told her if she'd done her homework she'd have known I'm bilingual."

"Hah! Good one," Elaine laughed. "She had it coming." She extended her hand. "It was really great to meet you."

"I enjoyed meeting you, Elaine."

"We all set?" asked Frank as he joined her.

"Yes. Frank, this is Elaine Jensen."

Frank shook her hand, "It's nice to meet you. I saw you a couple of years ago in Vegas. It was a great act."

"Thank you," she said with a broad smile. "I'm appearing at the Laugh Factory next week. I'd love for you to be my guests."

"We'd like that," said Frank.

She opened up a portfolio on the desk and pulled out a business card. She flipped it over and wrote a phone number down. "Here's my number. Give me a call."

Marina smiled. "I'll do that. Maybe if you get a day you and I could grab lunch. Have you ever been to Arcaro's?"

Elaine's eyes got big. "Death by Chocolate?"

Marina laughed. "I knew I liked you for a reason."

Frank carried the gift basket into the house and set it on the dining table. "You know someone will translate what you said to her."

"Probably. The bitch had it coming. She knew damn well not to bring up Peter."

"Hi," said Sarah as she came down the stairs. "I saw the interview and you could see the steam coming out of Jeannette Montrose's ears. Why was she picking on you like that?"

"Who knows. She did get a good quote, just not one she understood."

"Well, it wasn't right. You're lovely people. Much nicer than a lot of my parents clients."

Marina put her arms around the young woman's shoulder. "Oh thank you, sweetheart. You're an angel." She smiled at Sara's blush. "How are my babies?"

"Just fine. I put them down for their naps about twenty minutes ago so you have at least another hour or so before they wake up."

"That's great, Sara. Thanks. Why don't you take the rest of the day off. Frank and I are home now."

"Are you sure? I was going to put a load of the kid's laundry in."

"We've got it. No problem," she said. Sara grabbed her purse as she Marina led her to the front door. "We'll see you tomorrow."

"Okay, bye."

Marina locked the door behind Sara and turned around and smiled.

"What was that? You practically pushed her out the door."

She slowly walked toward him. "There may have been some pushing involved but you seem to be missing the point."

"And that is?" He smiled as she ran her hands up his chest.

"We have at least an hour to ourselves. Alone." She pulled him to her for a searing kiss. "We have some business to attend to," she whispered as she nipped at his ear.

"What would that be?" He closed his eyes and enjoyed the sensation of her lips on his neck.

"I said a few things early."

"Yes you did," he whispered as she nipped at his neck.

"Things I said I would do to you," she said as she slid her hands down the front of his jeans. "I am a woman of my word."

"Is that right?" he smiled.

"Follow me and find out." She walked up the stairs as he followed right behind.

Frank turned on the baby monitor so they would hear the kids when they woke up. He took off his jacket and pulled the nine mm out of its holster. He punched in the code on the gun safe and locked it away. He turned to see Marina coming out of the master bath wearing nothing but a silk camisole and panties.

"Now, about keeping my word," she said as she ran her hands down his arms. She pulled him into a passionate kiss.

He knew the look. Marina was a passionate woman but there were times she went almost primal, like now. She ran her hands down his chest to his jeans and undid the button. She slowly pulled down the zipper and tugged his jeans to his ankles. She pulled off his jeans and his boxers quickly followed. He stood still, enjoying whatever Marina had in mind. She yanked off his holster and t shirt and pushed him back on their bed. When Marina straddled him he felt like caught prey. She traced his tattoos with her fingers, then her lips and finally her tongue. He closed his eyes and gave himself over to her.

"My God, woman. You're making me crazy." He heard her chuckle. He felt her raise herself up and he opened his eyes to see her stripping off her silk. She finally took him inside. They both lost themselves in the moment. He finally dared to open his eyes. Marina was a beautiful, erotic vision. She was power, she was passion, she was his. They both cried out and collapsed in each others arms.

He pulled her close and kissed her. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you too, Josiah, so much."

He smiled and traced her cheek with his finger. "You were...inspired," he laughed.

"Well I told you I'd keep my word."

"Hell yeah, you did." He gave her a playful tap on her ass. "You took it to another level, just like when you were..." Frank sat bolt upright and looked at a smiling Marina.

"Remember the talk we had after we got married in the church? We talked about how we were going to raise Anna and Jonas," she said.

"Yeah..."

"We also said since God seemed so intent on creating them we'd let him decide about any more kids."

"Yeah...?"

She rubbed her hand over her belly. "Apparently he's made his decision."

"Seriously?"

"I'm about eight weeks."

"Oh my God!" He gave her a deep kiss. "Are you okay? Do you feel sick?"

"No, I feel fine," she smiled. "So you're okay with this?"

"Yeah, babe, I'm great with this. I admit the first time I was terrified but now I couldn't think of our life without them."

"I feel the same," she said. "I just hope God cut us a break and made it only one this time."

Marina set up some snacks for the watch party. Her mother and George would arrive shortly. All they had to do was walk down the block from their house. Val and Katherine had promised to join them. They had recently moved into Katherine's childhood home. Between moving and their busy careers, Marina hadn't seen that much of them lately.

Frank came into the kitchen and grabbed a beer from the fridge. "Kids are finally down. Anna wanted another story."

"She wanted another story?"

"Okay, I wanted to read her another story and she didn't object." He leaned over and kissed her cheek. "How are you doing, Mama?" he asked in Russian.

"I'm fine, Papa. How are you?"

"Excited."

Marina smiled. "Me too." She was so glad to see him like this. The last time she told him she was pregnant they had an enormous fight because they were both terrified of being parents. After eight months raising twins they both had a different perspective. "You know we should probably wait a few weeks before telling anyone."

"I suppose so." Frank pulled her away from the table and wrapped his arms around her waist. He gave her a soft kiss. "I love you, angel." He bent over and pulled up her blouse to expose her belly where he placed a kiss. "I love you too," he whispered. Marina brushed her hand over his head. When he looked up he could see tears in her eyes. "What's wrong."

"Not a single thing." A knock at the front door interrupted a moment they would continue later. Frank answered the door to Anna and George.

"Hi Mama, George," said Frank.

Anna gave him a kiss and walked into the kitchen. "Hello dear."

"Hi Mama."

"What can I do to help?"

"Oh, I'm fine. We kept it simple. A few desserts and coffee." On the table were cookies, a cheese plate, a fruit platter, cheesecake and in the center of it all one large

Death by Chocolate cake.

"A few desserts? Marina, there's enough here to feed the entire neighborhood."

"Mama, you know none of this will go to waste with me."

"I suppose," she said as Marina grabbed a cookie. Frank walked up behind her and slipped his arms around her waist. She took a bite of the cookie and then held the rest of it up to him. He snatched it away from her fingers and then gave her a cookie crumb covered kiss on her neck.

"Can I get you something, Mama? Wine?" asked Frank.

"Thank you, dear."

Anna took a seat on the couch next to George. "Are the children asleep?" asked George.

"Yeah, I just got them down," said Frank as he handed Anna a glass of wine.

"George, what can I get you?"

"I wouldn't say no to a beer."

"Coming up," he smiled.

Anna watched Frank as he walked into the kitchen. "Something is up with them."

"What are you talking about?"

"Something is going on. Just look at them." Frank came out of the kitchen with a beer and grabbed Marina by the waist for a quick kiss.

"What? They seem very happy."

"Exactly."

Frank answered another knocked at the door, greeting Katherine and Val. He handed Frank a bottle of champagne. "For after the show." They came into the living room to greet their parents.

"Hi Mama."

"Vasily, I don't recognize you since I haven't seen you in forever."

"Mama, it's been two weeks. Between my case load at Welcome Home and our new office and moving it's been crazy."

Anna managed a small smile. "Two weeks is still too long."

Val kissed her cheek. "I'm sorry Mama."

"Hi Daddy," said Katherine as she kissed her father's cheek.

"Hi honey. How's the new office?"

"It's good. Starting to take on a few clients outside entertainment." She looked at Val and smiled. "It's good to have a partner."

Marina gave her brother and sister in law a kiss. "Hey guys. I'm so glad you're here. What can I get you?"

"I'm good." said Val.

"I need a minute," said Katherine.

"Sure," Marina led Katherine to the kitchen. She grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge. "What's up?"

"The interview today. Jeanette Montrose is very unhappy. She's demanding a public apology."

"She's unhappy? She tried to question me about Peter."

"She says she was fulfilling her obligations as a journalist. You publicly insulted her and she called the head of the network who called me."

"I take it she got someone to translate."

"Yup."

"What did Brandon say?"

"He's a good guy for a suit. Told me Jeanette is a pain in the ass but she has a long term contract. If you don't apologize to her you'll not be asked back on the show."

"That's it?"

"It is a popular show."

"Which I don't give a damn about. Tell Brandon I said thank you for the call and as for Jeanette she can idi na fig."

"And that would mean..."

"Kiss my ass."

They got comfortable in the living room as LA Story came on. The story opened on a large man in his late sixties, yelling into the phone. He was speaking Russian but there were English subtitles. By the time he disconnected the call it was clear this was a nasty guy. Marina came on screen wearing a slinky gown and her dark hair gathered into a

beautiful twist. She began yelling at the man in Russian, telling him that they were going to be late for a party. The man slapped her and Anna gasped.

"Don't worry, Mama. He didn't really hit me. It was a stunt and the sound was added later."

"I still don't like it."

She had even less to like as the show went on. Marina was abused verbally and physically by her criminal husband. He was engaged in a turf war with a rival group and spent his days ordering retribution on his enemies. He spent his nights taking retribution on his wife. They came to the climatic scene where the husband was confronted by the rival boss in an empty hotel ballroom. What the husband thought was a negotiation was an ambush. He was shot dead by his rival. As he lay bleeding to death a door opened and in walked Marina. She bent down and looked at her dying husband and then up at his killer.

"It took you long enough," she said. The watch party gasped.

"The old fool thought I would forget what he did to my people. I would never negotiate with such a pig."

Marina checked his pulse. In a swift move she pulled a gun from her coat pocket and shot the killer dead. She put the gun in her dead husband's hand and stood. Then she looked straight into the camera and smiled. The camera followed her as she ran out of the ballroom and into the arms of the police. She instantly turned into the hysterical widow. The last scene had Marina giving orders to the dead husband's lieutenants. It was clear she was now the boss. The show ended with another disconcerting smile.

"Whoa," said Val.

"Holy crap, babe," said Frank.

"What?" asked Marina. She was wondering if maybe she'd taken her role over the top.

"You were amazing," said Katherine.

Frank began to applaud. He leaned over and gave her a kiss. "Bravo."

Everyone joined Frank's applause and gave their congratulations. "I still didn't like that man hitting you, but it was a wonderful performance."

"Thank you, Mama. Alexi is actually a very nice man, very funny. He would

apologize after every take."

"I think it's time for a little toast to celebrate Marina's return to the screen," said Val.

"Oh, none for me," said Marina.

"Alright that's it. What's going on? You two have been acting strange all night." demanded Anna.

"No we haven't."

Frank looked at Marina and smiled. "So much for waiting."

She nodded and took her mother's hand. "I'm pregnant."

Anna pulled her daughter into a tight hug and began to weep. "Oh, my baby, I'm so happy for you."

"We're happy too," she said as she smiled at Frank. He was beaming with pride as he accepted hugs from their family. Over the din of the party, Marina heard her babies cry. "Uh oh. Could be diaper duty, Papa."

"Okay, we'll be back in a bit," said Frank. "Val, would you pour the champagne and please get started on those desserts."

In the nursery they found a fussy Anna and a wide awake Jonas. "I've got her, you get him," she said. "You're supposed to be asleep, young lady." She set her on the changing table for a quick diaper change. "How's Jonas?"

"He's good. Aren't you, my man."

"Pa Pa Pa," he replied.

Marina gasped and looked at Frank. "Oh my God."

"What was that son? Pa Pa?"

"Pa Pa."

"He said it. He really said it," said Frank.

"He sure did."

"How about that," he whispered.

Marina saw Frank's eyes well and a tear ran down his cheek. She held her daughter in her arms as she leaned on Frank's shoulder. They stood in quietly, holding on to the moment.

It took a minute for Marina to realize her phone was ringing.

"Who the hell is calling us at this hour?" growled Frank.

She pulled her phone off the nightstand. It was her agent, Stan. In the last two months since her appearance on LA Story Katherine had been inundated with offers for her so she'd signed on with Stan Price. "Stan, what the hell? It's five thirty in the morning."

"I know it's early but I had to call. Your phone is about to blow up. You were nominated!"

"What? What are you talking about?"

"You were nominated for an Emmy! Best Guest Actress. Congratulations!"

Marina bolted upright. "What? Are you kidding me?"

"No I'm not. You were nominated. The awards are in six weeks. Congratulations, Marina."

"Thanks, Stan. I'll talk to you later." She disconnected the call and set the phone down.

"What was that all about?" Frank was sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"I was nominated for an Emmy for LA Story."

"What? Wow." He gave her a kiss. "Congratulations"

"Thanks. It is kind of exciting. All these years in the business and this is my first nomination."

Frank pulled her close. "You deserve it. You were great." He pulled her back down on the bed. "I'm very proud of you." They heard the kids babbling to each other in their room.

"How long do you think they'll give us?" she asked.

"Pa Pa Pa Pa," said Jonas

"You're being summoned."

He got out of bed and pulled on some boxers. He pulled her bathrobe off the bathroom door and tossed it to her. "You're drafted."

Marina checked on dinner as Frank fed the kids. "Did they say what they wanted to talk about?"

"Not really but I'm pretty sure it's got to be about Kane. I can't believe we're still dealing with this." Frank pushed his chair back with such force he startled Jonas. He snatched him quickly out of his high chair. "I'm sorry, buddy. Papa wasn't mad at you."

"If he hadn't put up so many legal challenges we wouldn't be." She heard the doorbell and turned off the stove. "That's them."

Marina returned to the kitchen with Katherine and Val. Anna squealed at the sight of her godparents. "Come to Uncle Val," said as he picked her out of her highchair. He gave her a kiss on the cheek and she giggled.

"Marina, how are you feeling?" asked Katherine.

"I'm good. The nausea isn't as bad this time."

Frank handed Jonas off to Katherine. "You might as well tell us what's going on."

"We have a court date," said Val. "Next week."

"Finally," said Marina.

"I wanted to brief you on what to expect," said Katherine. "We'll go over the details later but I think Kane is going to put this off on you."

"On me? I didn't point the gun into my own stomach."

"No but he's probably going to say you drove him to it."

"Are you kidding me?" shouted Frank. Anna started crying at the sudden outburst. He took Anna from Val. "Papa's sorry, angel," he cooed in Russian. He kissed her cheek. "We have dozens of witnesses who saw him holding the gun on her."

"I know. Everyone on our list has promised to be available to testify. But Kane has been out on bail all this time and has been working on his image. He's been keeping his nose clean."

"That must be killing him," said Marina.

Frank put his arm around her. "We'll be ready."

Frank waited until Marina was out to lunch with Kate Gallo before he had a talk with Sara. He didn't want to worry Marina. Her pregnancy was going well and he didn't want to upset her.

"Hey Sara, I want to talk to you."

She set down the children's laundry. "Sure, Mr. Nash, what's up?"

"First, I want to tell you how much my wife and I appreciate everything you do."

She smiled brightly. "Thank you."

He pulled an envelope out of his jacket. "This is a token of our appreciation."

Sara opened the envelope and gasped. "Wow. Thank you."

"You're welcome. You deserve it. There is something else I need to talk to you about. You know about the Peter Kane incident."

"Yeah, what a creep."

"Yes, well the trial has been scheduled for next week. I'm going to want you to be extra vigilant on security. You may have reporters trying to get information or pictures of the kids. And no one gets in this house."

"Of course, sir." Sara put her hand on his shoulder. "I love Anna and Jonas. I will always protect them."

"Thank you, Sara. That means a lot to my wife and I. I know you're looking for a full time teaching position but we'd really appreciate it if you could hang in with us until the new baby comes."

Sara smiled. "Mr. Nash, I stopped looking for another job." She blushed a little. "I figured you might need me, especially now that there's a new baby on the way. I love working here. I love the children. I get to speak Russian to them. You and Mrs. Nash are great. I'm very happy here."

Frank sighed and smiled. "Thank God." One less thing to worry about.

Marina peered into the courtroom and saw it was packed. It had been nearly two years since Marina laid eyes on Peter Kane. He sat at the defense table looking every inch the movie star he used to be. Ever since he'd been charged with kidnapping and attempted murder no studio would touch him. Not because they gave a damn about what he'd done to her. No production could be greenlit without insurance and no insurance company would touch him. She closed the door and took a centering breath.

"Are you okay?" asked Katherine.

She reached for Frank's hand. "I will be once we finally get this bastard behind bars."

"Mrs. Nash I want you to temper your expectations," said Martin Collier, a forty something prosecutor with LA D.A.'s office.

"Excuse me?" Frank demanded. "That man had a gun shoved in my wife's stomach. He should be in prison already."

"Mr. Nash, you need to control yourself. The defense may raise the fact that you shot him."

"He was going to kill her! It was cleared as justifiable two years ago."

"I'm not saying you weren't justified. I'm saying the defense could use it as a way to garner sympathy."

"Mr. Collier, what do you think the odds are you'll get a conviction?" asked Val.

"Honestly, fifty fifty."

Frank started rooming the waiting room. "I can't believe this. Two years he fights the trial and now you think he might get away with it!"

Val smiled. "I have an idea."

Marina sat in the court room behind the prosecutor's table. Frank sat next to her. Val and Katherine sat next Frank. The prosecutor's opening argument was a recital of the four months of hell Peter Kane had put her through. She had tried to push that time out of her mind and for the most part had been successful. Now it all came flooding back. She couldn't seem to stop her trembling hand.

Frank took her hand and whispered, "I'm here, baby. I'm right here."

She smiled and nodded, trying to appear more confident than she felt. She sat quietly, holding Frank's hand and looking straight ahead, never letting Peter drift into her line of sight. She listened to the prosecution detail the taunting letters, dead flowers, the trespassing at her home and her abduction from the Marine Ball. She couldn't stop a tear from running down her cheek.

"The state calls Franklin Nash to the stand."

Frank stood and squeezed Marina's hand one more time before letting it go. He was sworn in and sat down.

"Mr. Nash, please tell us how Nash Security became involved with this case."

"Objection. This witness is nothing more than a bodyguard. He's certainly not qualified to offer expert testimony."

The judge turned to the DA. "Is this witness qualified to give testimony?"

"Mr. Nash, would you please list your qualifications for the court."

"Retired as a Colonel after thirty years in the Marines. My service was in military security and intelligence. My final command was as Commander of Embassy Security for the European and Asian theaters of operation."

Marina gasped. Frank never talked about his military career. She'd asked a few times but he pushed his silence off on confidentiality. She had no idea.

"After I retired I founded Nash Security. My company is fully licensed and bonded in the states of California, Nevada and Arizona. We provide security for various corporations and dignitaries."

"And who would those clients be?"

"I'm sorry but confidentiality prevents me from revealing those names."

Peter's lawyer snickered.

Frank smiled. "I can tell you that my company grossed thirty million dollars last year, so I believe I can state that I am, in fact, a qualified security expert."

Marina gasped again. She and her husband were going to have to have a conversation.

"The court accepts that the witness can testify. The objection is overruled."

"Mr. Nash, can you tell us how you became involved in this case?"

"I received a call from Major Jacob Sokolov. We'd served together for several years."

He told me his sister had a problem and he asked me for help."

"Did he tell you the nature of the problem?"

"He said she'd been receiving unwanted gifts with frightening notes. When the gifts started appearing at her home, she fled to her brother's home."

Frank continued with the details of what he and his team went through to track down Peter up to confirming his fingerprint on the last bouquet of dead flowers.

"Mr. Nash please take us through the events of the Marine Ball."

"The Ball is a benefit for the charity Welcome Home. Marina is a primary sponsor and fundraiser. Peter Kane showed up at the party, using his status to get past the guards. He cut in on Marina when she was dancing with one of the guests. He forced her off the dance floor at gunpoint and tried to abduct her."

"Objection. The witness did was not present during this alleged abduction."

"Sustained."

"How did you know that Ms. Sokolov did not leave of her own accord?"

"She sent a message to our table for Lt. Colonel Nash. She knew I'm a full bird Colonel. Major Sokolov and I gathered some men and we began a search. Approximately five minutes later we found Peter Kane with a gun pressed to Marina's side forcing her toward an exit."

"Objection. He could not have known if she was being forced."

"Really?" yelled Frank. "Well, when she kneed him in the balls I'd say that demonstrated she didn't want to go with him!"

The judge pounded his gavel. "That's enough. Objection is sustained. The jury will disregard the witness's characterization of forced."

"What happened next, Mr. Nash?"

"I told him he couldn't escape and he should give up. He said if I came any closer he would kill her. It was then Marina kneed him and he fell to the ground. He screamed at her, calling her a bitch and aimed his gun at her. That's when I shot him." The jury and the gallery gasped. The judge pounded his gavel again.

"Order."

"You shot him in the shoulder," said the DA.

"Yes, I could have killed him but it wasn't necessary. He was disarmed and I had

thirty marines backing me up. He wasn't going anywhere."

"One more thing, Mr. Nash. You obviously have a personal stake in this case. You're married to Ms. Sokolov."

Frank looked at Marina and his smile blocked out everything for her for just a moment.

"Yes. Marina and I have been married for nearly two years."

"No further questions," said Collier. "Your witness."

Peter's lawyer, Celeste Markham, stood and approached the witness box. Marina looked at the thirty something attorney with her too blonde hair. She also smiled at her client way too often. She knew the look on Peter's face. He was sleeping with his lawyer and he didn't care who knew it. In fact, he'd prefer everyone knew it.

"Mr. Nash, you were hired as a bodyguard for Ms. Sokolov."

"No."

"Excuse me?"

"I was never hired. Her brother Jake is a good friend and fellow Marine. When your brother asks for help, you help. You don't charge them."

She smiled and glanced at Marina. "Well you did get something out of it."

Marina gasped. She was shocked at the woman's inference. She was more shocked that Frank didn't explode. She watched him take a breath and she smiled. "That's it, babe," she thought. "Don't let her get to you."

"Do you mean did I gain a wife and children I adore? Then yes, I did gain something."

Markham turned and faced him. "Your wife is a very wealthy woman."

"Was that a question?" Frank asked. Marina smiled. She was enjoying this.

"The fact is your wife is one of the wealthiest women in Hollywood."

"Probably," he said with a shrug.

"It must be nice going from a soldier's income to the life that Ms. Sokolov provides."

"Objection," shouted the DA.

"Again, was that a question?" asked Frank.

"You have every reason to back your wife's statement."

Frank shook his head and smiled. "Okay, you obviously weren't listening earlier,

counselor. My company is very successful. I have a seven figure income. I don't need anyone to support me. I confirmed my wife's statement of events because they are facts. Oh and by the way, I'm a Marine not a soldier. Soldiers are in the army."

Marina smiled. The attorney couldn't shake Frank and it was galling her.

"Mr. Nash, you are many years older than Ms. Sokolov."

"Seventeen to be exact," he said with a smile.

"Mr. Kane is a much younger man. Handsome, famous and very wealthy. One might say he's a much better match for Ms. Sokolov. You'd do anything to stop your competition, including shooting him."

Marina was near panicked. She knew her husband and knew this woman was pushing his limits. An outburst could damage the prosecution's case. She caught Frank's eye and took a deep breath. He understood and did the same.

"Kane has never been a threat to me. What he was, if fact, was a threat to my wife. He sent her vile messages, terrorized her in her own home and threatened to kill her. My goal was to protect her and stop him, which is what we did."

"We, Mr. Nash? Who is we?"

"Myself, the associates at my company who did research and provided backup and Marina."

"What did Ms. Sokolov do?" asked the now curious lawyer.

"She never gave up. She was terrified. Someone she didn't know who was threatening her but she stood her ground and fought. She was very brave." He looked at her and smiled. "I'm very proud of her."

Markham realized she gone too far. She mumbled, "No further questions." and returned to her seat. Apparently she'd forgotten the golden rule of attorneys. Never answer a question when you don't already know the answer.

Frank returned to his seat and clasped Marina's hand. "Well done, Josiah," she whispered.

Collier stood. "The state calls Marina Nash."

Marina was sworn in and sat down. She looked at Frank who smiled and nodded.

"Mrs. Nash, please tell us about the events during and immediately following your work on the film 'Countdown'."

"I was working on 'Countdown' when things started showing up at the set. Flowers with no card. I asked around but know one noticed anything. Then the flowers came with cards, some were creepy some were just gross. I'd throw them out. When the film wrapped they started showing up at my house. The stalker knew where I lived. I was afraid to go back to my own home."

"Is that when you hired Nash Security?"

"I never hired him. Frank had been stationed with my brother Jacob. Jake knew after Frank retired from the Marines he'd opened his security firm. He called Frank and asked for help." She looked at her husband and smiled. "He came right away to help."

"What led you to believe Peter Kane was your stalker?"

Peter's attorney jumped to her feet. "Objection to the characterization."

"Sustained."

The DA rephrased the question. "What led you to believe the anonymous gifts and notes were from Peter Kane?"

"The last delivery to my house was a bouquet of dead roses. On the card was a fingerprint that was identified as Peter's."

"Objection. Ms. Sokolov is not a fingerprint specialist."

"Sustained."

"Who told you it was Peter Kane's fingerprint?"

"Frank. They compared the fingerprint on the card to Peter Kane's fingerprint."

"Your husband is not a policeman. How did he get access to Peter Kane's fingerprints?"

"They told me later that one of Frank's associates followed Peter and retrieved a coffee cup from a public trashcan."

"Tell the court about the night of the Ball."

"It was a very successful fundraiser for Welcome Home, a charity for returning veterans. I was dancing with a Marine when Peter Kane cut in. When I tried to get away he shove a pistol in my stomach and ordered me to come with him. That's when I sent the Lt. Colonel message to Frank. I knew he would figure out I was in trouble."

"Did you leave the Ball willingly?"

"God no. I knew if I didn't comply he would start shooting."

"What did he say to you as he led you out?"

"He told me he was going to rape me." The gallery and the jurors all gasped. "I told him he'd have to kill me and he said he didn't have to. That it would be my word against his."

"What happened when Mr. Nash found you in the hallway?"

"Frank ordered him to drop his weapon. He refused. When his attention turned to Frank I kned him in the groin. He fell to the ground screaming and then aimed his gun at me. That's when Frank shot him."

"No further questions. Your witness."

Markham stood and approached the witness box. "Ms. Sokolov..."

"It's Nash."

"Excuse me?"

"My name. It's Nash. Marina Nash. Would you like to see my driver's license?"

"That won't be necessary. Now, Mrs. Nash. Tell me about working with Mr. Kane on 'Countdown'."

"It was an eight week shoot. I played his love interest in the movie. There was nothing particularly remarkable about the shoot. Rehearsals, blocking, shooting."

"You had some passionate scenes with Mr. Kane."

"It was part of the movie."

"You became involved with Mr. Kane during filming."

"What? God, no. The only relationship I had with Peter Kane was on film. Other than that, there was nothing."

"Do you really expect the jury to believe that you crawled into bed with a man like Peter Kane and there was no relationship?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying."

Markham picked up a remote and turned on a TV screen. It was the love scene from the movie. Marina watch for an uncomfortable few minutes before Markham turned off the screen. "That looks pretty real to me."

"It's called acting. It's my job."

"Isn't true that when you wanted more of a relationship with Mr. Kane he said no. It was only after he turned you down that you made up the alleged stalker and blamed

him."

"What? We never had a relationship nor did I ever want one."

"What about the love letters?"

"What love letters?"

"The ones you wrote to Mr. Kane."

"I never wrote any letters to him."

Markham went back to her table and pulled some pages from a file. "Defense exhibit five through ten. Love letters written to Mr. Kane during the filming and continuing after the Marine Ball."

"What? That's insane. Let me see them." The judge nodded and Collier handed her the letters. They were typed on a printer with a forged signature. She looked up at Frank who smiled and nodded. He knew she never wrote any letters. She looked at Val who nodded. Her family had her back. She flipped through the letters and started laughing. "Oh my God, these are dreadful." She read a few lines. "I long for you to hold me in your arms and make love to me the way only you can." She followed up her reading with more laughter. She glanced at Peter whose face was beet red. She got to the last letter, the one supposed to have been written about six months after the Marine Ball. She shook her head and smiled. "This last letter that I supposedly wrote was dated April twenty fourth. On that date I was on my honeymoon, in a secluded cabin, with no internet and no cell service. He wrote these himself." She looked at Peter and shook her head. "You need help, Peter."

Peter Kane pushed himself away from the defense table and lunged at her. "You bitch!" he screamed. "I'll kill you!"

Frank vaulted over the wooden railing and ran straight for the witness box. He placed himself directly in front of Marina. A bailiff subdued Peter as the judge shouted for order.

"Bailiff, remove Mr. Kane. Ms. Markham, I believe you're going to want to have a conversation with your client. In the meantime," he banged his gavel. "Court's adjourned."

Marina and Frank sat with Val and Katherine in a conference room. The DA had asked them to wait.

"Are you okay, babe?" asked Frank.

"I'm fine." She smiled and took his hand. She still needed his strength. "Val, I can't believe that worked."

"He's spent the last two years cultivating an image of respectability. Guys like that need constant validation. Laughing at him was bad enough but when you pitied him like that he couldn't handle it."

Collier entered the room and set down his briefcase. "Well, that was certainly and interesting turn of events. Kane's lawyer came to me looking for a plea. I told her I'd have to consult with you. I'd offer twenty five years with a minimum of fifteen served. I think he'll take it. If he goes back to trial he's likely get a lot more. "Would you be okay with that?"

"Hell yes. Peter Kane out of our hair for at least fifteen years. I'll take it," said Marina.

"Are you sure, babe?" asked Frank.

Marina rubbed the slight curve of her belly. "Yeah, I'm sure."

Frank turned to Val and Katherine. "What do you think?"

"I think it's a good offer," said Val.

"And it means you won't have to testify anymore," added Katherine.

"Okay then," said Frank.

"Excellent. I'll inform the court."

"Do you need us for anything else?" asked Marina.

"No, you can go."

"Thank God, I'm starving," she said with a smile.

"What else is new?" laughed Frank.

After a long lunch with Katherine and Val, Frank and Marina drove home. "Okay Marine, we need to have a conversation," said Marina.

"About what?"

"First, you never told me about your command."

"I thought it was pretty boring. A lot of training exercises and paperwork."

"It's not but we'll put a pin in that for now. Why didn't you ever tell me how

successful your company is? I thought it was just you and Jerry and your office manager."

"That is all."

"And yet you made thirty million dollars last year?"

"Not me, personally. The company."

"I'm going to need more than that. How do you and Jerry do thirty million?"

He looked at her and winked. "We're very good." He laughed at the face she made.

"You know most of our cases are upgrading security systems and procedures for companies. There's a lot involved and my company has the reputation of being fast and efficient. I made some good contacts when I was in the service. When I retired I let a few of them know about my company. Pretty soon I had more work than we could handle. That's when I hired Jerry."

"Wow. Okay. The income part?"

"Since when is that important to you?"

"It's not but it seems I should at least know."

"Last year, two point five."

"Damn. Way to go, Marine."

"Thanks, can we move on now?"

"Not yet. And don't think I didn't see you roll your eyes."

"Fine. What else?"

"You know how much I made last year, right?"

"Of course. I went over everything with the accountant."

"I feel like an idiot. I signed our tax returns but didn't read them."

"Would you like to? They're in the office."

"Not really. Frank, it's not like I don't trust you. I trust you with my life, I trust you with our kid's lives. I just think I should know."

He put his hand on her thigh and rubbed. "It's fine, sweetheart. I know you trust me. I'll pull out all the records and we can go over them together."

"Thanks, babe," she said with a smile. They turned the corner to their street when they saw a wall of Harley's down their driveway and wrapping the front of their lawn. So many men in bike leathers were standing around, it looked like a meeting of the Boozefighters was taking place on their front lawn.

"What the hell?" asked Frank. He maneuvered around the bikes and into the garage. They both jumped out of the car and ran into the kitchen. "Sara! What's going on?" called Marina.

"Oh, Mr. and Mrs. Nash I'm so glad you're home."

"Where are my children?"

"They're fine. They're in the nursery in their playpen. I hope you don't mind but I didn't know what to do so I called my Dad." Mike Williams joined them from the living room.

"Hey Frank, Marina. The Peter Kane thing is all over the news. How he flipped out in court and lunged at you. It no sooner happened when the paparazzi descended."

"They were banging on the door and scaring the children. I told them to go away through the speaker but I didn't open the door. They wouldn't leave. I called the police and they came but said all they could do was get them off the property. As soon as the police left they were right back at the door. That's when I remembered when you told me about what happened when you brought the children home from the hospital. That's when I called my Dad."

"I sent a blast text and everyone showed up about twenty minutes later. Sven did his thing and they left."

"I hope it was okay I let my Dad in the house but I was kind of scared."

Marina smiled and pulled Sara into a tight hug. She gave her a kiss on the head. "Sara, you're brilliant. I'm so glad you're here for our kids. Of course it's alright your Dad's here. All of them can come in. After all, they are all the kids uncles."

Marina went to the door and hollered. "Yo! Boozefighters, get your beautiful badass selves in this house right now."

Frank hugged Sara and shook Mike's hand. "Thank you. Both of you."

Marina came back to the kitchen. "I say we order a bunch of pizzas right after we go hold our babies."

Frank smiled. "Excellent idea."

Marina picked up Anna and Frank picked up Jonas. "Papa, kiss." he said.

Frank covered his son's face and neck with noisy kisses. He was rewarded with baby giggles.

"Mama, kiss," said Anna. Marina gasped. She'd managed Mama and Papa over the last few weeks but it was the first time she said a simple sentence. Marina covered Anna's face and neck with kisses just like Frank had done to Jonas. She was also rewarded with baby giggles.

"She must be learning from Jonas," said Frank. "He always seems to be a little bit ahead of Anna. I want to try something." He looked at his son and smiled. "Jonas, kiss." His son leaned in and touched his father's cheek with his open mouth. Frank smile was blinding. "Thank you, Jonas." He gave his son another round of kisses and got more baby giggles in return.

"Let me try," said Marina. "Did you see what Jonas did, angel? Anna, kiss." To give her daughter a clue she leaned her cheek toward her daughter. Anna met her mother's cheek with an open kiss. Marina's eyes welled. "Oh my God, Frank." He leaned in and gave her a kiss and then kissed Anna.

"Well done, angel," he whispered. "As much as I want to stay here and enjoy this moment, we have twenty hungry bikers down stairs and you promised them pizza."

"True. You know it could be time to break out some of the baby gifts."

Frank and Marina came back downstairs with Anna and Jonas wearing the baby Harley t-shirts and jackets that Cabe and Kate had given them. The men smiled and fussed over the children like the uncles they were. Anna loved the attention but Jonas was a bit more cautious. He handed his son off to Sara while Anna was giggling at her Uncle Sven.

"Mike, I can't thank you enough for coming to our aid like this."

Mike patted his back. "No problem, brother. Your kid calls, you come. You'll find that out soon enough."

"You do know Sara wasn't in any danger. With the doors locked and the security activated no one can get in without a code."

"I know. Sara told me how secure the house is."

Frank watched as Sara held Jonas in the middle of a crowd of his biker uncles. She was allowing him to feel safe while exposing him to people he didn't see often. "I don't know what we'd do without her. She's a godsend."

"She loves her job and that makes me happy. She's always talking about Jonas this and Anna that. She loves those kids."

"They love her too."

"She also told me about that generous bonus you gave her. That's really good of you. She feels appreciated here."

Marina joined them. "Oh believe me, she is. And now she'll have a bit more job security."

"Excuse me?" Mike asked.

"Sara, you didn't tell your father our news?" asked Marina.

"Of course not. It's not my news to tell."

"What's going on?" asked Mike.

Frank smiled at Marina. "We're having another baby."

Mike pulled Frank into a tight hug. "Congratulations, brother." He gave Marina a hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Congratulations. You want to tell them?" he asked pointing their friends.

"Sure," said Frank.

Mike let out a whistle. "Listen up! Frank and Marina are having another baby."

The men all cheered and each hugged Frank and Marina. Frank smiled as Marina was dwarfed when she accepted a hug from Sven. He caught her gaze and she smiled. He'd never imagined life could be this good.

The next few days were some of the worst of Marina's career. She hadn't realized that the court proceeding had been filmed. If she'd known she would have used any legal means to not allow the video's release. Now she couldn't turn on the TV without the sight of Peter Kane lunging over the defense table at her. The story of the rise and fall of one of the country's most popular celebrities was front page news all over the world. The one bright spot in the video was the world also got to see Frank do a one armed leap over the railing separating the gallery from the court and launching himself in front of Marina. The sight of her man protecting his woman gave her an almost primal satisfaction.

Her phone hadn't stop ringing. If the reporters weren't hounding her they were hounding Katherine and her agent, Stan. They'd tried camping out in front of their home but were chased away by the police. They even tried knocking on her mother and George's door when they realized she lived on the same block. Anna Sokolov didn't need the cops. Her righteous Russian fury had been enough to frighten them away.

Frank had gone to work at Marina's insistence. He had responsibilities to his clients he needed to fulfill. In the meantime, Marina and Sara had become prisoners in the house. Mike Williams had offered to bring back the Boozefighters but she couldn't have a permanent biker encampment on her front lawn.

Sara was playing with the kids upstairs while she did their laundry. She rubbed her growing belly and whispered to her new baby in Russian. "I'm not ignoring you, my love. Mama's just a little preoccupied. I promise this afternoon it's just you, me and Papa at the doctor's office." She felt a flip in her stomach, her baby's first kick. "Well, hello there, angel."

Frank pulled into his driveway, grateful that the reporters had been dispersed from the front of their home. What had happened with Kane was bad enough but Marina was still in the early stages of pregnancy and he didn't want the stress of the situation to affect her and the baby.

He had to admit it was getting to him too. Reporters were camped out in front of his office. Their phone lines were tied up with nuisance calls. He was glad that they were going to the doctor's office today. They could focus on their new baby and each other.

He pulled straight into the garage and closed the door behind him. "Yo, Diva! Are you ready?" he yelled as he walked into the kitchen. He went upstairs to the bedroom and found Marina sitting on the bed wrapped only in a towel. "Mmmmm. Now this is a sight I love coming home to."

"Frank come here, sit."

As he sat next to her on the bed she took his hand and slipped it under the towel on her stomach. He smiled at the unmistakable kick of their new baby. "Wow," he whispered. "This never gets old."

Marina shot him a look. "I'll remind you what you said when I'm nine months pregnant and your child is playing soccer with my kidneys."

"Sorry," he smiled. "It's just all so amazing to me." He cupped her cheek in his hand. "I never imagined this would be a part of my life. Now, I can't imagine my life without them."

"I know. I feel the same." She gave him a soft kiss that he deepened. He pulled the towel off her body as he ran his hand over her warm skin. "Mmmmm, wonderful, but later. If you distract me we'll be late for the doctor."

"I'm holding you to that. You get dressed while I say hi to the kids."

"How did they know?" asked Marina. She looked at the swarm of reporters standing outside the doctor's office.

"I don't know but I intend to find out," growled Frank

"Don't go all growly Papa Bear on the staff."

"Fine. I'll be nice," he said as he pulled into the garage. "Before we go up I want to talk to you about something."

"Something wrong?"

"Yes, all this Kane craziness. It's not good for you and the baby. I want us to go away for a couple of weeks. Just the two of us."

"What? What about the kids, your job."

"The kids will be fine. I've already talked to Sara. I want her and the kids to hold up in Carmel for awhile. Jake and Marina are right next door. Mama and George agreed to go too. That way they can get away from the reporters while spending time with Anna and Jonas."

"And where would be while our children are in Carmel?"

"In our private cottage at Sandcastle. I've already called. We can have it for as long as we want. We can sit on the beach, drink fruity drinks with umbrellas and forget about everything for a little while."

"What about your job?"

"Honestly, I can't get anything done at the office and neither can anyone else. By the time we get back from Hawaii the press will be on another story." He paused and rubbed his hand over her belly. "Pretty soon we'll be doing two a.m. feedings again. This will be our last chance to get away, just the two of us, for a long time. Let's do it."

"I don't know. Would it be safe for the baby?"

"How about we ask the doctor?"

Nurses and clerks hovered around the front desk of the office while they signed in. The staff seemed to enjoy their close contact with Marina. Today, he would use that to their advantage.

"Hi Mrs. Nash, Mr. Nash," said the desk clerk.

"Hi," said Frank. "Sorry about all the reporters outside. I don't know how they found out our appointment." He noticed a young clerk looked nervous. "I'm going to have my security firm look into it. An appointment is medical information. No matter who sold the information, they could be held liable for violating privilege."

The older woman at the desk looked shocked. "Oh, Mr. Nash, I hope you don't think it was someone from this office." The young girl blanched and held the file she was reading higher to cover her face. Frank knew he would never be able to confirm this girl had sold their information but he would put the fear of God into her.

Frank caught the young girl glancing at him and smiled at her. "Of course not."

"You can come right back," said the nurse and led them into the examining room.

Marina grabbed the gown and began changing her clothes. "What was all that about looking into who sold information?"

"Did you see the young clerk? Blonde about twenty. It was her."

"What?! How do you know?"

"The look on her face. I'd never be able to prove it but I guarantee she'll never do it again. At least not to us."

"Should we tell Dr. Weston?" she asked as she got up on the table.

"No. Like I said, no proof."

There was a knock at the door and Jennifer Weston came in. "Hello. How are you feeling?" The doctor opened Marina's file.

"Good. The baby starting kicking today."

"Really?" she smiled. "Well let's have a look."

Frank stood by the head of the table while the doctor conducted her exam. He always tried to hide how uncomfortable it made him but he thought Marina probably knew.

The doctor peeled off her gloves and smiled. "Everything seems to be moving along as it should. Your blood pressure is a little higher than I'd like but nothing dangerous." She pulled the ultrasound machine close and put the conductive gel on Marina's belly. She turned on the screen and they were able to see their child.

Frank leaned over and whispered in Russian, "This never gets old." He put a quick kiss on her forehead.

Marina smiled. "No, Josiah, it never does."

"Do you want to know the sex?" the doctor asked.

"Yes, definitely," they both said.

The doctor looked closer and smiled. "Strong heartbeat, everything is looking good." The doctor leaned closer to the screen and said, "Oh, hello there." She hit a button that printed a picture of the ultrasound. She handed to Marina and smiled. "Congratulations, it's a boy." Marina began to weep and Frank was not ashamed to join her. He kissed her as he took the tissues from doctor. "I'll see you both next month."

"Oh wait, we do have a question," Frank said. "I'm sure you know about the Peter Kane incident."

"Of course. It's all over the news. That's why I'm not that concerned about your blood pressure. The slight elevation could be expected after something like that."

"We want to know if it would be safe for the baby if we go away for a couple of weeks."

"Depends. Where are you going?"

"A resort on Molokai. Private cottage and beach. I thought it would be good for both of us to get away from the crazy for a while."

"Would you have access to help if you need it?"

"The main building is a ten minute boat ride and they have a doctor on call."

"They do?" asked Marina.

"I've already checked."

"It sounds heavenly," said Dr. Weston. "Not only safe, it sounds like a brilliant plan."

"You're sure?" asked Marina.

"It's Hawaii. You'd have easy access to any emergency care needed. Go. Relax. Get your blood pressure down. It's my official prescription."

"Thank you, doctor," said Frank. He smiled at Marina. "See. I told you it's a good idea."

"Bugger. You just love being right." She stood and began to dress.

"Oh, and you don't?"

"I just don't know how I feel about being away from my babies for two weeks."

"I tell you what. We'll go with two weeks in mind but if you want to come home early we will."

"You just want to go drink those fruity drinks with the umbrellas."

He pulled her close and cupped her ass in his hands. "No. I want to see you back on the beach wearing that wrap thing you had on that day. Remember?"

"The sarong?"

"Yeah, that." He gave her a kiss a little too passionate for the doctor's office.

"Well don't count on me looking the same." She rubbed her hands over her curved belly.

He lifted her chin to look at him and whispered in Russian. "You are so beautiful. I love you more every day."

She sighed and smiled. "You win. We're going native."

Marina looked out the window and watched the clouds rolled by. She should have been enjoying the luxury of the private jet but her brain was still with her children. She'd already talked to her mother and Sara. Everyone was securely ensconced in their beach house.

"Earth to Marina," said Frank.

"I'm sorry." She managed a smile.

"The flight attendant wants to know if you want something to drink?"

Marina looked up at the smiling young woman. "Just some water, thank you."

"I'd ask where you were but I think I know."

"I was just hoping the kids are okay."

He took her hand in his. "I understand. I worry about them too. Sara is with them and so are your mother and George. Jake and Mike are next door."

"What if the reporters find them?"

"I've stepped up the security at both houses."

"You did?"

"Yes. There are panic buttons all over both houses. If there is a problem all anyone has to do is push one and the police are alerted."

She leaned her head on Frank's shoulder. "I'm sorry, babe. I know I'm being silly."

"No you're not. It's the first time we left the kids for any length of time. I was going to save this until we get to the cottage but Cabe got me a communication set up. His Scorpion team put it together. It will let us FaceTime with the kids whenever we want."

Marina threw her arms around him. "Thank you," she whispered.

"Honestly, I did it for me as much as you."

She gave him a kiss. "I love you, Josiah."

"I love you too."

She sat back in her seat when the young woman brought her a cold bottle of water and a glass with ice. "Thank you."

"Please let me know if there is anything else you want." The attendant let them alone in their cabin.

"I can't believe you hired a jet," she said.

"This way there are no other passengers to say they were flying with Marina Sokolov. The only one meeting us at the airport will be our limo."

Frank walked out on the porch of their private cottage and took a deep breath. This is what they both needed. He sat down on the chaise lounge and put up his feet. He twisted off the top of a beer and took a deep sip. It was the first time he'd relaxed in two weeks. Marina had fallen asleep as soon as they'd settled in. He'd let her sleep while he checked in at home and at the office.

The children were in their glory being spoiled by the family. His office had gotten back to normal as soon as he put out the word that he and Marina had left town. He looked out at the lagoon and sighed. He missed his kids already but he wouldn't tell Marina. They both needed this. Some time alone before the new baby. His son. He leaned back and closed his eyes imagining what his son would look like. Jonas was already resembling him. Anna definitely is going to look like Marina, God help him. Jonas had a calm nature and was learning quickly. Frank thought he saw glimpses of Jake in him. Anna was a high energy whirlwind. He didn't know what she would make of herself but what ever it was he was sure she would settle for nothing less than the best.

Who would this new boy be? Maybe he'd be a jock like he was in high school. "Good Lord, high school," he thought. By the time this new baby graduated Frank would be in his mid seventies. He'd have to step up his workouts if he expected to hang around that long.

"Hey there, Marine. Looking for some company?"

He slid over in the large chaise and patted the seat. "Sure thing, cutie. But don't tell my wife, she's very possessive."

She ran her hand over his chest. "I can see why." She leaned in and gave him a kiss.

"Did you have a good nap?"

"Yes I did. What have you been up to?"

He smiled and rubbed his hand over her belly. "Actually I was thinking about this little one."

"Oh yeah? What were you thinking?"

"I was thinking we don't have a name."

"Do you have any ideas?"

"I do. What do you think about Jacob?"

Marina gasped. "Are you serious?"

"Yes. Jake Nash. It's a good name. Solid."

"I think it's a wonderful name." She gave him a kiss. "My brother will be so pleased."

"I thought Vasily for his middle name. That we have both brothers covered."

"You really want to name our son after my brothers?" she smiled.

"I've known Jake for years. Val has become a great friend. They're good men, Men our kids can look up to."

Marina covered his hand with hers and together they held their child. "What do you think, angel? Are you Jacob or would you prefer Jake?" They both felt the baby kick. "Jake it is."

Frank and Marina walked up to the end of the cove. There was a soft breeze and the water was calm. He set out a beach blanket as he watched Marina slip off her beach jacket.

"You remembered," he smiled. She was wearing the same olive color strapless top she'd worn on their honeymoon. Tied around her hips was the same long printed scarf. She rubbed her hand over her round belly.

"I warned you it wouldn't be quite the same."

He took her by the hand. "You're still the most beautiful woman in the world." He gave her a soft kiss and guided her to the blanket. "You need some sunblock." He pulled the lotion from the beach bag and put some in his hand. He slowly rubbed the lotion into her exposed skin. He untied the knot at her hip and pulled the scarf from her body. He rubbed lotion down her long legs.

"Mmmm, that feels good," she said.

"Roll on your side, I'll get your back." He rubbed lotion onto her shoulders and down her back. He unhooked the top of her let it fall free.

"What are you doing?" she asked as she tried to cover herself.

He pulled the loose top from her hands and tossed it aside. "If you have to ask then I'm doing it wrong." He slid his fingers inside the bottom of her suit and started sliding it down. He pulled it off and tossed it with the rest of her clothes.

"Josiah, are you crazy?"

"We did this the last time we were here."

"The last time we were here I wasn't six months pregnant."

"Hush, woman. I'm busy." He rubbed lotion on her ass then rolled her on her back. He looked at her and again, she took his breath away.

"What?" she asked as she tried to cover herself with her hands.

"My God," he whispered. "You're so beautiful." He raised himself over her and gave her a soft kiss. "So beautiful," he whispered again, this time in Russian.

"You really are crazy."

He laid down on the blanket next to her and turned her face toward him "You don't get it do you?"

"Get what?"

"It's not about your flat stomach," he smiled and rubbed his hand over her skin. "Or your beautiful round one. It's never been about your parts, lovely as they may be. Do you know what I see when I look at you?" Marina only shook her head. "I see passion, brains, wicked humor." He gave her another kiss. "I see Anna's eyes and Jonas smile. I see my whole world."

A tear ran down her cheek and he brushed it away.

"I love you, Josiah," she whispered.

The last time they'd been on this beach they'd gotten lost in an overwhelming passion. This time it was even better.

Marina stared in the mirror while her beauty team, Casper and Rose, did their work. She had past the six month mark in her pregnancy and she'd definitely popped. There was no way to hide. Alfonso had designed an elegant Grecian style black gown for her. It wrapped around her body, draping over her belly and not too low over her larger breasts. She knew the dress was beautiful and Casper and Rose were the best but she still felt like an awkward Macy's float. She tried to put on a brave face, at least for Frank's sake. He thought she was beautiful. She smiled at the memory of their time on the beach. Maybe the look on Frank's face was a better indicator than her mirror.

"Diva? Are you ready?" asked Frank as he walked in to the bedroom.

Marina looked him up and down and smiled. He looked so elegant in his tux. "Yes, goon. Casper and Rose are just about done."

Rose looked at Frank and smiled. She reached into her makeup kit and pulled out a tube of lip gloss. "Here. Take it." She looked back at Frank. "You're going to need it."

Marina spotted a flat velvet box in Frank's hand and her eyes lit up. "What's that?"

"A little present."

"That would be our cue to leave," said Casper. "Your hair is perfect, don't mess with it."

"Yes, sir," said Marina with a smile.

"I was a sergeant. I worked for a living," replied Casper.

Marina smiled. She knew her hairdresser had been a Marine, just like her husband. "Yes, Sergeant."

As Casper walked passed Frank he held out his hand. "Semper Fi, Colonel."

"Semper Fi, Sergeant," Frank replied with a smile. He closed the door behind them. "I still can't get over that your hairdresser was a Marine."

"Forget him. What did you get me?" Marina reached for her present and he held it away from her.

"Not so fast, diva. Stand up and let me look at you." He took her hand and helped her to her feet. He looked her up and down and smiled. "Rose was right. You're going to need the lip gloss." He gave her a soft kiss. "You're so beautiful," he whispered in Russian.

"I have something you might like to wear tonight." He opened the velvet box and Marina gasped. She couldn't believe what she was looking at. It was jewelry that had the unmistakable design of her sister in law, Michaela. The necklace was made of multicolored sapphires linked with gold. The matching earrings mirrored the design of the necklace with smaller sapphires.

"Marina? Sweetheart?"

"I'm speechless."

"Well, that's a first."

She looked up and rolled her eyes. "Smart ass." She reached out and touched the beautiful stones. "This a present? Not a loaner?"

"Yes it's a present. Now turn around so I can put it on you." She turned around and he clasped the necklace. She ran her fingers over the cool stones. He pulled the earrings out of the box and handed them to her. She slipped them on and smiled.

"Frank, this is so extravagant."

"You don't have anything like this and I wanted you to have something to celebrate your nomination."

"Oh, Frank." She slipped her arms around his neck. "I love it but it must have been very expensive."

Frank smiled. "Sweetheart, I can afford it."

Marina blushed a bit. "I know you can. It's just so extraordinary."

He placed a kiss on her nose. "So are you."

Marina sat in the limo, waiting for their turn to exit and walk the red carpet. It had a long time since she'd walked one of these. The door was opened by security and she took a deep breath.

"Sweetheart, are you okay?" asked Frank.

She pasted on her best smile. "I'm fine. Just stay with me."

He smiled and whispered, "Always." He got out of the car ahead of her and reached for her hand. As soon as she exited the limo she was blinded by the flashes of cameras.

"Holy crap," she said in Russian.

"I'm right here, babe."

She looked at Frank and his smile calmed her. He was her anchor to everything that was real and true. With Frank by her side, she could accomplish anything. Even walk this damn red carpet.

Reporters called her name and she turned and waved. They called out the standard questions. "The dress is by Alfonso, the jewelry by Michaela Turner," she repeated several times. A few asked when she was due and she gave a noncommittal, "Not for awhile yet." There were a few video stations for the various news feed. Frank directed her attention to the People magazine location and she saw some familiar red curls.

"Good idea," she said. "One interview and into the theater."

"Sounds like a plan." Frank waved at the reporter and was greeted with a smile.

"Colonel Nash, Mrs. Nash, it's so good to see you," said Jimmy Collins. He made way for them to join him in front of the camera.

"It's good to see you, Jimmy," said Marina.

"You look amazing. And congratulations on the new addition."

"Thank you," she smiled.

He touched his earpiece and nodded. "They're going to cut to me in a few seconds. You ready?"

"Let's do it," she smiled.

Jimmy faced the camera and smiled. "I'm here with Marina Sokolov, and her husband Colonel Frank Nash." He turned to Marina. "Congratulations on being nominated for Outstanding Guest Actress."

"Thanks, Jimmy. It's very exciting. I'm delighted that Alexi Kartov was nominated as well. Working with him and the cast and crew of LA Story was a great pleasure."

"Alexandra was a character unlike anything you've done before. What are the chances we'll see Alexandra again on LA Story?"

Marina was startled at the question. "Well, I guess you'll have to ask producers about that."

Jimmy smiled. "Well, I for one, would love to see Alexandra again."

"Thank you."

Jimmy's face went serious. "I know the past few weeks have been a difficult time.

How are the two of you doing?"

Marina felt Frank's grip tighten on her hand. He might have been upset at Jimmy's question but she knew Jimmy had to ask. "You're right. The past few weeks have been very difficult for me and my family. We are just glad that the court proceedings are complete."

Jimmy quickly smiled. "You look wonderful. You certainly have a busy time ahead of you, with your twins and now the new baby." He turned to Frank. "Are the twins keeping you busy, Colonel?"

"They certainly are," he smiled.

"Future Marines?"

"Maybe," laughed Frank.

"I think he's just looking forward to when he can get them on Harleys," Marina smiled.

Frank led Marina into the lobby area of the theater. A gowned young woman with an earpiece led them to a group from LA Story. The imposing figure of Alexi Kartov, six feet two inches tall with a mane of silver hair, was the center of attention. A star back home in Russia, he'd come to LA for a movie shoot and decided to stay. He quickly matched his star status in the States. He was holding court with a number of people. LA Story getting both Alexi and Marina to star had been a coup. Next to him was Misha Voronin who'd played Marina's shooting victim. Voronin spotted her and reached for her hand.

"Ah, Marina my love. Here you are," said in Russian as he kissed her cheek. "What is this?" he asked looking at her baby bump. "How can you do this to your magnificent figure?"

Frank clenched his teeth and counted to ten. Decking this guy would be bad. Fun, but bad.

He looked Frank up and down like he was an interloper. "Ah, I see you brought your husband with you." He leaned closer. "I was hoping you would sit next to me during the show. It would give us a chance to get reacquainted."

Marina looked at Frank and smiled. "It's nice to see you again, Misha," she replied in Russian. "I'd like you to meet my husband, Colonel Frank Nash."

Misha extended his hand as if he was royalty greeting a commoner. "How do you do?" he said in heavily accented English. "You married a soldier? What a pity," he said to her in Russian. He looked surprised when Frank's handshake turned to a vise grip.

"I do just fine, Voronin," Frank replied in flawless Russian. "I'm a Marine, not a soldier." He pulled him close and whispered. "And I am Marina's husband, her armed and now very pissed off, husband." Misha's face paled.

"Of course, Of course," he muttered. He turned toward the group and said, "I'll see everyone inside." Then he wisely beat a hasty retreat.

Frank looked at Marina and shrugged. "Just how much trouble am I in?" He was stunned when she smiled and kissed his cheek.

"None," she whispered in his ear. "I thought you were kinda hot."

"Yeah?" he laughed.

"Oh yeah. When we get home I will be rewarding my knight in shining armor."

Alexi interrupted their moment. "Marina, sweetheart. I'm so glad to see you," he said in Russian.

"It's good to see you again."

"This is an exciting night for both of us."

"Yes, it is. Alexi, I'd like you to meet my husband, Frank Nash."

He smiled warmly. "It's so nice to meet you," he said in English.

"It's very nice to meet you, too. Marina told me how much she enjoyed working with you," he replied in Russian.

"Hah," Alexi laughed and patted Frank's back. "I knew I would like you. Marina told me what a good man you are."

Frank looked at his wife and smiled.

"I hope she explained that all that abuse was staged. I never laid a hand on her."

"Yes, she was very clear, Alexi. She said you took good care of her during the stunts."

"Marina, there you are," said a tall, thin man in his late forties with a haggard appearance despite his very expensive tuxedo. "I wanted a chance to talk to you." He

looked down at her belly, "Oh my. I didn't know. Congratulations."

"Thank you. I'd like you to meet my husband, Frank Nash. Frank this is Martin Springer, the producer of LA Story." He acknowledged Frank with a quick nod. "Your story was the highest rated show of the season. People are still talking about it."

"That's very nice," she said.

"I want to talk to you about bringing Alexandra back. Everyone wants to see what she'll do next. Have you seen the Twitter feeds?"

"Martin, I have twins at home and another baby on the way. I've been a bit busy for Twitter."

"Fine, fine. Are you interested?"

Marina smiled. "When you have a script send it to Stan. I'll take a look."

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "Great, great." The lights in the lobby flickered indicating they should take their seats. "We should head in."

The crowd started moving toward the open doors as Marina slipped her hand in Frank's.

"About this reward," he began.

"Patience, Marine. Patience."

Marina had taken a much needed break at the large ladies rest room. Frank waited outside the room for her, while he checked in at home.

"The kids are asleep and your Mother wants you to know she's making a plov for later."

Marina laughed. "You wonder where I get my appetite."

They were about to go back to their seats when they were met by Jennifer Lee, a lovely eighteen year old actress who'd been active in the business since she was in diapers. She'd gotten her big break playing Peter Kane's daughter.

"Hi, Ms. Sokolov," she said with a hesitant smile.

"Hello Jennifer. Please, call me Marina. This is my husband, Frank Nash."

The young blonde smiled and nodded. "I saw how you jumped the railing in court. That was pretty great."

Marina smiled. "I thought so too."

"Are you okay? He didn't hurt you, did he?" she asked.

"Peter? No, he didn't hurt me." She looked at the nervous girl and wondered. "Did he hurt you?" she asked quietly.

The girl paled but shook her head. "I'm just glad someone stood up to him." She looked to see if anyone was watching them. "Somebody had too," she said. "I glad you're okay."

"Thank you, Jennifer. I appreciate that."

"Well, I should get back."

Frank wrote a name and phone number on the back of one of his business cards. As he reached to shake the young girl's hand he slipped her the card. "It's a pleasure to have met you, Jennifer." He leaned closer so only the two women could hear. "Call the number on this card, anytime, day or night. You can also reach Marina and me through the number on the front. Please call. You will always be welcome."

Jennifer's eyes teared as she glanced at the card and slipped it in her bag. "Thank you," she whispered before rushing off.

Marina looked at Frank. "What the hell just happened?"

"She's another one of Peter's victims. From the looks of it she may have been

raped."

"What?" she gasped.

"I've seen the signs before."

"What number did you give her beside ours?"

"A victim's hotline. I've worked with them before. They're very good and absolutely confidential. Poor thing," he whispered. "I hope she calls."

Marina watched Frank as he watched the young girl disappear into the crowd. She took his hand in hers. "Let's get back," she said. It was all she could say. In all the time they'd been together, she had never loved him more.

The evening had gone well so far for LA Story. Alexi won the Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actor and had thanked Marina during his speech. Her category was up soon.

"Are you nervous?" whispered Frank.

"No. I'm up against some powerful performances. The odds of me winning are slim."

"My money is on you."

John Fox, who'd won Best Guest Actor last year, came center stage. As much as she told Frank she wasn't nervous, her heart raced as she took his hand for strength. She sat back and watched short clips of each nominated performance.

"And the Emmy goes to...Marina Sokolov for LA Story."

Marina gasped and sat frozen until Frank leaned over and whispered "It's you. You won." She looked at him and broke into a wide smile and gave him a quick kiss. He helped her to her feet and she made the short walk to center stage. She accepted the trophy and turned toward the audience. She was stunned to see she was receiving a standing ovation. Standing near the aisle, cheering as tears ran down her cheeks, was Jennifer Lee.

"Oh my," she said. "Thank you so much." She took a moment to catch her breath. "I want to thank Michael Springer, Alexi Kartov and everyone at LA Story. Working with you was a joy. I want to thank my husband, Frank." She smiled and slipped into Russian. "I love you more than I could ever say." She held up the trophy. "This would mean nothing with you and the kids." She rubbed her belly. "All of them. You are my world." She smiled as she saw him wipe a tear from his eye. She looked back at the crowd and returned to English. "Most of you are aware of the recent event in my life. The past two years were very difficult for me and my family but I was lucky. My brother Jacob and his wife Michaela reached out to me when I was trouble. They called Frank who came right away to help. Together, we found a way." For a moment she focused her attention on Jennifer. "I want to speak to all of you who find yourself in a similar situation. Reach out. To family, friends, anyone who offers you a hand. Call a hotline. I promise you there are people who will listen and who will believe you." Marina looked over the audience and then back to Jennifer. "You are not alone." She nodded to the audience to acknowledge their

thunderous applause as she was led offstage.

After the obligatory trip to the press room for pictures and questions, they used her pregnancy as an excuse to go home early. Frank could see she was being very quiet despite the excitement of the evening.

"Are you okay, babe?"

"Do you think she'll make the call?"

"It has to be her decision but I hope so. Now she knows we'll be there when she needs us."

"I love you, Josiah," she whispered.

"I love you too, diva."

The awards started at five pm so it was barely seven thirty when they got home. Marina opened the door to the familiar scent of her mother's cooking. "Mama, we're home." She set the award down on the sideboard.

Anna came out of the kitchen wearing a huge smile and pulled her into a tight hug. "Marina, sweetheart. Congratulations. We're so proud of you."

Her stepfather, George gave a hug and kissed her cheek. "Congratulations, sweetheart."

"Thank you. How were the kids for you?"

"They were fine," said George. "They went down about thirty minutes ago."

"We really appreciate you doing this for us. Sara wasn't available tonight," said Frank.

"Nonsense. We're their grandparents. We love doing it," said Anna. "Now come eat."

Marina followed her mother into the kitchen where she saw all her childhood favorites wait for her. She squealed when she saw on the kitchen table was a plate of perozhina kartoshka, a Russian chocolate cookie. "Oh, Mama, thank you," she said as she hugged her mother and then popped one of the cookies in her mouth. "Oh...so good."

Anna gave her hand a light slap. "You'll spoil your dinner."

"You couldn't have made all this in three hours."

"I made the cookies at home this morning. You can't have champagne to celebrate so I brought you these."

"You couldn't have known if we'd be celebrating tonight or commiserating."

Anna waved her hand dismissively. "Bah. I knew you would win."

Marina smiled and kissed her mother's cheek. "Of course you did." She noticed the table was set for just two. "Mama, aren't you staying for dinner?"

"No dear, we've eaten. George is taking me to the movies. You two relax and have your dinner." She reached for her purse and called for her husband. "George, I'm ready." They found Frank and George admiring her Emmy.

"Aren't you staying for dinner?" asked Frank.

"No. We've got tickets to that new western movie, "They Rode By Moonlight."

"That's getting great reviews. It's a great love story," said Marina.

George looked at his wife. "Love story? You told me it was a western. Horses and gun fights."

Anna smiled. "It's both." George rolled his eyes. She turned to Marina and gave her a hug. She switched to Russian, which she rarely did around George. "I'm very proud of you, angel." She touched the trophy on the sideboard. "Not for this, as wonderful as it is. I'm proud of who you have become. I used to worry about you, that you would never find the right direction for your high spirits. Then you met, Frank." She smiled at her son in law. "I don't worry anymore. You are a kind and loving woman and a wonderful mother. I don't worry about my grandchildren with you and Frank for parents."

"Oh, Mama, thank you," she whispered as she pulled her into a tight hug. "I love you so much, Mama."

"I know, angel. I know."

"Alright woman, you've roped me into this movie. The least you could do is not make us late."

"I call you tomorrow. Now go eat your dinner."

Marina closed the door and smiled at Frank. "Do you believe what she said?"

Frank wrapped his arms around. "Of course I do. I agree with every word."

"Wow. It's been a hell of a day."

"Yes it has." He gave her a soft kiss. "Now about that reward for your knight in shining armor."

She pushed on his chest. "Later, Galahad. Your Queen is starving."

Marina used to enjoy people telling her she was glowing with her pregnancy. Eight months in and she was over it. She was sitting outside in the chaise getting some sun. Sara had taken the kids up the street to her mother's house. Anna and Jonas would get a dose of Nana spoiling them and Marina would get a few hours of quiet. As soon as she sat down with her ice tea, Jacob decided to use her insides like a trampoline.

"Jacob, sweetheart, please cut Mama some slack. I just want to close my eyes for a few minutes." She grabbed her stomach as he took another hard shot. "If you give Mama a break I'll get you a pony." Jacob finally settled and she wondered if he'd want Appaloosa or a Quarter horse. She was close to dosing off when Frank's ringtone rang her phone.

"Hey babe. What's up?"

"How are you feeling?"

"Your son was kicking the hell out of me but he's settled down now."

"What do we owe him?"

"A pony."

"Figures. Are you up for a conversation?"

"Isn't that what we're doing?"

"No. I have Jennifer Lee on the phone. She wants to talk to us. I want to conference you in."

"Yes, of course." Marina waited until she heard a beep.

"Jennifer? Marina is on the line with us."

"Hi, Ms. Sokolov."

"Marina, please. How can we help?"

"I've been thinking a lot about what you said that night at the Emmy's. You were right about Peter Kane. I want to..."

Marina heard Jennifer's voice hitch and she knew the girl was crying. "Jennifer, we're here for you. Both of us."

"Whatever you need, Jennifer," said Frank.

"I called that number you gave me. I've just been talking to them. It's been helpful

but I decided I want more. I want him charged with rape."

Marina tried not to gasp. Frank had been right.

"Tell us how we can help," said Frank.

"I'm not sure what to do. I can't just walk into a police station."

"No, you can't," said Marina. "It would be a media circus. Jennifer, my brother and sister in law are both attorneys. They were very helpful with my case against Peter. I know they would help you."

"They would? They don't know me."

"Of course they would. We should meet. It's Saturday and I think they'd be available. Why don't you come to our house and I'll have them join us?"

"Are you sure? I don't want to put anyone out."

Marina's heart broke at the desperation in the girl's voice. "I'm positive. Frank will give you the address. I'll call them now."

"Thank you, Marina," she whispered.

Marina answer the door to Katherine and Val. "Thanks for coming, guys. I really appreciate it."

"Can you tell us now what's going on?" asked Val.

"Someone's coming over who needs your help. It's in connection with Peter Kane."

"Oh God. This is going to be bad, isn't it?" asked Katherine.

"Yeah, it is. They need legal help."

"Who?" asked Val.

"Let's wait until she gets here." Marina poured some ice tea for them just as Frank came in the door.

"Hey babe," said Frank as he gave her a kiss. "Hi guys. Thanks for coming. Jennifer should be here soon."

"Do you want to tell us what's going on?" asked Val.

"Jennifer Lee is coming over. She needs your help."

Ten minutes later answered the door to a very pale Jennifer. "Hi, Mr. Nash."

"Please call me Frank. Come on in Val and Katherine are here."

Marina greeted Jennifer with a hug. "I glad you're here," she said softly. "This is my brother Val and his wife Katherine."

"Hi," she sat down in the small arm chair. "I guess they told you who this is about."

"They told us it involved Peter Kane but we don't know more than that," said Katherine.

She clutched her hands tight and looked down. "He raped me." Marina reached over and took her hand.

"When did this happen?" asked Katherine.

"When we did "Sophie's Dream."

"That was several years ago," said Katherine. "How old were you?"

"Thirteen."

"Oh God," Marina whispered as she squeezed her hand.

"I want him to be held accountable but I don't know where to start."

"It's within the statute of limitations, the problem is proving it," said Val.

"After it happened my Mom took me to the hospital. They did tests and stuff."

"If they still have the samples we can run a DNA test and compare it against Kane's. Since he's a convicted felon now, his DNA will be on file," said Val.

"Jennifer, I need to ask. Why didn't you pursue this when it happened?" asked Katherine.

"My Mom wanted to file charges but I wouldn't let her."

Marina saw the tears well in the young girl's eyes. "Why?"

"Roseanne said I'd ruin my career. Sophie's Dream was my big break. I'd been working forever and this was my chance to make some real money. My father left us when I was little. My Mom worked hard but she had to take care of my little sister." She brushed a tear off her cheek. "We needed the money."

"Roseanne Tomlinson?" Katherine nearly growled the name. Jennifer nodded.

"I take it you know who she is." said Frank.

"Oh yeah. Her reputation is crap. She'll do anything to anyone for her percentage."

"I hope you fired her," said Marina.

"I don't think I can."

"Of course you can. I will be happy to take care of it for you," said Katherine.

Jennifer managed a genuine smile. "You can do that?"

"Hell yeah, I can do that."

Her smile faltered. "I need an agent. What if no one signs me?"

Marina smiled. "Jennifer, do you not know how good you are? Every agent in town would kill to have you, including mine."

"You really think so?"

"Sweetie, I guarantee it."

It had been a crazy two weeks. The media had a field day when the DA filed charges against Peter Kane for rape. The DNA evidence was conclusive and his attorney convinced Peter taking the additional twenty five years on his sentence was better than risking another trial. The internet was plastered with pictures of Jennifer Lee and reprinted what Peter had done to her. She snickered when she saw the tabloids speculating on to where Jennifer had disappeared. She and her family were currently enjoying Marina and Frank's house in Carmel.

Marina hadn't issued a statement with this new round of attention. She didn't feel it was appropriate to comment on a case she was not directly apart of. The best thing she could do was support her new friend in her efforts to heal. Katherine had delighted in telling Roseanne Tomlinson she would no longer be representing her biggest client. When she threatened to sue, Katherine pointed out she would be happy to explain to the world how she was complicit in Peter Kane's crime. Somehow Katherine convinced the woman that not reporting his rape of her thirteen year old client was a criminal act. It made her a horrible excuse for a human, but not a criminal. Stan Price had been ecstatic to sign Jennifer and promised to field all offers until she was ready to go back to work.

"Yo, Diva! Where are you?" called Frank.

"I'm in the bedroom, where else would I be?"

Marina had her feet up in bed because she could do so little else. The adjustable base Frank had bought for their bed during her first pregnancy had come in handy. She'd been put on bed rest because her pressure had been a bit too high. She assured Dr. Weston that is was just all the Kane drama, but the doctor didn't want to take any chances. She hated that she was so restricted. Anna and Jonas first birthday was next week and she wanted to have a party but Frank said no. She still had another three weeks to go and she was bored out of her mind.

Frank walked into the bedroom looking as delicious as ever. His workouts kept him in better shape than men half his age. "Hey, get over here, goon. Give your wife a kiss." He leaned over and gave her a quick peck that she tried to deepen.

"Oh no you don't, diva. You can't get your blood pressure up."

She smiled and gave his ear a quick nip. "Then stop looking so damn good."

He sat on the edge of the bed and took her hand. "I need to talk to you," he said quietly.

"What's wrong? Is it Mama?"

"No, calm down. All friends and family are hale and hearty."

"So what's wrong?"

"I got a call from the ADA Collier. It's about Peter Kane."

Marina flung herself back against her pillows. "What has he done now?" She bolted up. "Oh God, he's not getting out? They said he'd be in for twenty five after the fifteen for what he did to me."

"No, calm down. He's not getting out." He took a breath. "He's dead."

"What? What happened?"

"He was murdered in his cell. Collier said they found him this morning. Apparently when he accepted the plea deal for raping Jennifer he became a marked man. It made him a convicted child molester and there is no one lower on the prison food chain. Collier wanted us to know about it before it hits the news."

Marina could see Frank was trying to gauge her reaction. The problem was she wasn't sure how she felt. "Oh God, we have to call Jennifer."

"I already did. I talked to her and her mother. They're obviously as shocked as we are. She said she'd call you later." He placed a kiss on her forehead. "How are you?"

She sat back and shook her head. "I don't know. Honestly, I don't feel anything. I'm not sad or upset. Peter was someone I knew and he's dead and I don't feel a thing. God, what does that make me?"

"Human."

Frank couldn't tell whether Marina was really okay or she was going to have a delayed reaction to Kane's death. A knock on the door interrupted their conversation.

"Mrs. Nash?"

"Come in, Sara," said Frank.

"Oh, hi Mr. Nash. I didn't realize you were home. We just got back. The children are ready for their naps. Your Mom and Mr. Davenport had them out in the garden. It was so cute. Mr. Davenport was showing them all the flowers and telling them their names."

"I'll be in the nursery in a minute," said Frank.

"No, bring them here please."

"Marina, you're supposed to be relaxing."

"I need to see my babies."

Frank nodded toward Sara. "I'll come with you." He followed her toward the nursery and was greeted by his son and daughter saying "Papa, Papa."

"Hello angels." He picked up Anna and Sara picked up Jonas. He gave Anna a kiss and leaned over and gave Jonas a kiss.

"Mama, Mama," called Jonas. They walked across the hall to the master bedroom. When the children saw their mother they began a chorus of "Mama, Mama."

"Dare my babies. Co see Ma." Frank sat Anna next to Marina as Jonas reached out for his mother. "Come ee ma." Her hands slipped as she tried to hold on to her son.

Frank picked up Jonas and handed him to Sara. "They need to go down for their naps." Sara looked as confused as Marina. He took Anna and followed her into the nursery. "I'm going to need you to stay tonight."

"What's going on Mr. Nash?"

"I'm not sure yet." He returned to the bedroom to see Marina struggling to get out of bed. "Stay put."

"I wan ma babies."

He grabbed her by the shoulders and sat her down. "Please baby. Listen to me." He put a forefinger in each of her hands. "Squeeze as hard as you can."

"Why?"

"Please baby, just do it." She did and now he was sure what was happening. "Sweetheart. I want you to try and stay calm. Your pressure is too high. You're slurring your words."

"Pre..." she struggled for the words.

"Preeclampsia. The doctor warned us about it. I'm calling for an ambulance and then calling Dr. Reston."

Frank was headed toward Mercy General, following as close behind the ambulance as he could. He'd been right about her pressure, it was sky high. He called Marina's doctor and then her mother. Anna and George would meet them at the hospital. He focused on not crashing his car as he wove in and out of traffic. He pounded his hand on the dashboard when he was forced to stop at a traffic light as the ambulance drove on.

When he finally reached the ER parking lot he screeched to a halt in the first space he saw and bolted toward the entrance. "My wife was just brought in," he said to a girl behind the desk.

"If you'll take a seat..."

He didn't hear her finish as he barreled through the doors to the ER. He ran up and down the corridor of curtains. He stopped dead at the gurney where Marina lay. She looked pale and terrified.

"I'm sorry sir. You'll have to wait outside," said a nurse.

He ignored her and took Marina's hand. "I'm here, baby. It's going to be okay." Marina tried to smile and nodded.

"Sir, you need to wait outside," the nurse repeated.

Marina tightened her grip on his hand. "Don't worry, angel," he said in Russian. "I won't leave you." He turned to the nurse and spoke in English. "Dr. Weston will be here shortly." The nurse huffed and pulled the curtain around them as she left. He leaned down and gave her a kiss.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

"I know, baby. We're here and the doctor is on her way. It's going to be okay." Only a few minutes later Dr. Weston came into the exam area. She hadn't bothered with a fake smile. She knew they both understood what was going on. She put her hand on Frank's shoulder.

"Frank, I need you to wait out in the hall for a few minutes."

He nodded to the doctor and looked at Marina. "Don't worry, sweetheart," he said in Russian. "I won't go far. I promise." Marina smiled but the single tear running down her cheek broke his heart. He needed to do something, anything. He felt so helpless. He

leaned up against the wall outside the curtain and the same Nurse Ratchet walked by.

"Sir, you can't stand here. That's what the waiting room is for."

He growled at the woman and walked out of her line of sight but kept Marina's cubicle in his. He pulled out his phone and hit a contact number. "Hello, Cabe. I need some help."

Dr. Weston pulled the curtain back and Frank moved to Marina's side. "How is she?" he asked.

"I need a few more tests but I'm fairly certain we're looking at preeclampsia." Marina gasped and he took her hand. "As soon as I confirm the diagnosis I'm going to give you something to induce labor."

"It's too soon," said Marina.

"Only by a couple of weeks. Jacob was nearly six pounds at your last exam. It will be safer for him and you to be born now than to wait. I know this isn't the way you expected this to go but you're in an excellent hospital." She put her hand on Marina's shoulder and smiled. "And you have an excellent doctor." She looked up at Frank. "I really am very good at this. Someone will be here soon to take you for tests. Then we'll be moving you up to maternity."

"Thank you, doctor," said Frank. He leaned over Marina and gave her a soft kiss. "It's going to be okay."

"I want Mama here."

"I already called her. I bet they're already in the waiting room."

"You should call your parents."

His parents were staying at the Malibu condo waiting for the birth of their third grandchild. An orderly pushed opened the curtain. Frank could see the surprise register on the man's face. Even in the jaded world of LA, seeing Marina Sokolov was a big deal. "Okay, your ride is here." He leaned over and gave her a quick kiss. "I love you, diva," he whispered in Russian.

"I love you too, goon," she replied with a forced smile. He watched as the orderly pushed Marina down the hall.

Not knowing where else to go he wandered out to the waiting room. He spotted a pale Anna sitting with George.

"Frank, what's happening?" asked George.

He sat down next to Anna. "She probably has preeclampsia. Her blood pressure is too high so the doctor is going to induce labor."

"Oh God," she whispered.

"She has a great doctor and we got here right away."

A tall, grey haired man approached Frank. His thousand dollar suit said this was no reporter. "Mr. Nash, I'm Dr. Henry Wilson, Chief of Staff. I have a location that will be more secure and your family." Frank and his in laws followed the man to an elevator. "Once your wife's tests are complete she will be moved to a private suite in maternity."

"I take it you heard from Cabe Gallo," he said with a small smile.

"I'm glad I did. Your wife's health and security are my primary concerns. He led them to a conference room on the maternity floor that had been outfitted with a coffee urn, bottles of water and a tray of Danish. "There is a security guard stationed on this floor." The man pulled a business card out of his jacket. "This is my personal cell number. If you need anything at all, please call me."

"Thank you," said Frank.

"Would you like some coffee, Frank?"

"No thanks, George. I need to call my folks. I'll be back."

Anna put her arms around him. "Take your time, sweetheart. We'll be right here."

He placed a kiss on top of her head and whispered. "Thank you, Mama." He walked into the stairwell and pulled out his phone. He was relieved when his father picked up. "Dad, Marina and I are at the hospital. They need to induce her."

"Your mother and I will be there as soon as we can. It's going to be okay, son."

Frank barely whispered. "I hope so, Dad." He told him what room to go to before he disconnected the call and leaned back against the wall. He walked down the stairs to the first floor. He moved through the halls until he found what he was looking for.

Jonas Nash knocked on the conference room door before he opened it. "Hi, it's just us." Anna stood and hugged Florence. George shook Jonas hand.

"Where's Frank?" asked Florence.

"We don't know," said Anna. "He left to call you but hasn't been back. The nurse said Marina would be back in her room in about twenty minutes. She'll be so upset if he's not here."

"I may know," said Florence. "I'll be right back."

Florence walked to the first floor and found her son in the same place she'd found him the last time they were waiting for Marina to give birth. He was staring at the multi denominational altar and she heard his prayers. "Frank." He turned and her heart broke. He'd been crying. She sat down and folded her son into her arms. Her son may be fifty seven years old, but he would always be her baby boy.

"I'm scared," he whispered.

"I know, baby. It's okay to be scared. Just remember, you got them here in plenty of time. You have an excellent doctor in an excellent hospital."

"I feel so helpless. I can't fix this."

"No, you can't." She nodded toward the altar and smiled. "But you made sure to talk to the one who can."

Frank managed a small smile. "How did you get here so fast?"

"You called us nearly an hour ago."

"What? Marina. I've get to get back to her."

She placed a calming hand on his shoulder. "I was just upstairs. She'll be in her room in about ten minutes."

Frank would marvel at the strength his wife possessed to endure childbirth if she wasn't currently crushing his hand.

"Oh God," she yelled as she fell back against the pillows on her bed.

"We're almost there," said the doctor.

"You're doing great," said Frank as he kissed her forehead. Marina curled up in pain as she cried out.

"Push," said the doctor. Marina gave one last push and fell back against Frank as the doctor delivered their son. "Hello, little man," she said as she passed him off to the nurse.

"My baby," Marina called. "Bring me my baby."

"Just a second," said the doctor. "Let us finish our job."

"Why isn't he crying?" Frank said in a panic. As if on cue, they heard the most beautiful sound in the world, Jacob Vasily Nash crying.

"Is he okay?" he asked.

Doctor Reston looked at them and smiled. "He's great." The nurse placed the crying baby on Marina's chest.

Marina kissed her son and began to speak softly to him in Russian. "Hello my love. Everything is okay now. You're here, angel. Everything is going to be fine." Jacob's cries slowed as his mother spoke to him. He finally settled against her chest.

Frank smiled and put a soft kiss on his son's head. "Hello my boy," he whispered in Russian. Jacob closed his eyes and cuddled into his mother's chest. He ran his hand over his son's small back. "It looks like Jacob loves the sound of his Mama's voice."

Marina gave him a blazing smile. "Do you really think so?"

After they spent some time with their new son, Marina and Jacob were moved to her private room. Frank went to the conference room to tell his family the news and was greeted with a room full of expectant faces. In the few hours since he's last been in the room Marina's brothers and their wives had joined his parents and in laws. Also in the room were Cabe and Kate Gallo. He entered the room and smiled.

"Would anyone like to meet my new son?" He accepted the hugs and congratulations of the gathering.

"How's Marina doing?" asked Anna.

"Good. The doctor said her pressure is better and she should be fine in a couple of weeks."

Cabe approached and gave him a hug. "Congratulations, brother."

"Thanks, Cabe. I'm so glad the both of you are here."

"We just wanted to make sure everything was okay with your stay and the security," said Kate.

"We leave you with your family. Give Marina our love," said Cabe.

"Oh no. You're family too. I know she wants to see you both."

Frank took a seat on the bed next to Marina and his son. He grabbed a box of tissues from the night stand and handed tissues to his mother and mother in law as the grandparents introduced themselves to their new grandson. Her brothers came forward and gave Marina a kiss.

"Hey there little man," said Jacob. "Are you finally going to tell us his name?"

Marina looked at Frank and smiled. "Go ahead. You tell him."

"His name is Jacob," he said.

Jake gasped and looked back and forth between Frank and Marina.

Frank looked at her brother Vasily and smiled. "His full name is Jacob Vasily Nash."

Val broke out into a broad smile. "Are you kidding me?"

"No," said Marina. "Frank said he wanted him named after men he can look up to."

"This was your idea?" Jake asked in a whisper. Frank nodded. He walked over to Frank and pulled him into a hug. "Semper Fi, brother."

"Semper Fi."

Val pulled Frank into a hug. "I don't know what to say. I'm honored."

Marina had surrender her son to the attentions of his namesakes. Jake was holding him while Val leaned over his shoulder and made faces at the baby. The upside of being Marina Sokolov was no one complained when her room turned into a small party,

especially when two of the guests were the biggest donors to the hospital. Cabe and Kate each gave Marina a kiss.

"Congratulations," said Cabe.

"He's a beautiful boy," said Kate.

"Thank you. I'm so glad you're both here. There's something we wanted to talk to you about."

"Is everything okay?"

"Everything is fine," she said. "Thank you for making sure we're safe."

"You are always there for us and our children," said Frank. "That's why we'd like you to be Jacob's godparents."

Cabe managed a hoarse, "Thank you" as he gave Frank a tight hug. Kate's eye's teared as she hugged Marina. "We'd be honored."

Frank put his arm around Marina and placed a soft kiss on her lips. Their family had gone home and they took a moment to enjoy the quiet. "How are you feeling?"

"Tired, but good." She stroked her son's back as he slept in his small crib. "He's really okay, isn't he?"

"You heard the doctor," he said. "He's fine." He led her the few steps back to her bed. "I want you to lay down and get some rest."

"You're staying, aren't you?"

He snickered. "Like you could get rid of me. They're bringing me a bed, just like last time. And before you ask me, Yes, Anna and Jonas are fine. I spoke with Sara and she's spending the night. She sends her love, by the way." He gave her another kiss. She laid down in bed and he covered her with the blankets that were several grades above hospital standards. "Now, what can I do for you?"

Marina gave him a wicked smile. "Well..." she pulled him close and gave him a deep kiss. She pulled back and whispered, "Cheeseburger."

"What?"

"A cheeseburger. I'm starving. And fries."

He laughed and gave her another quick kiss. "Your wish is my command, my queen."

As he headed toward the door she yelled. "And a chocolate shake."

He walked to the first floor, feeling decidedly better than the last time he'd made this trip. Before he went to the cafeteria he made one quick stop. He walked into chapel and stood before the altar. He searched his mind for the right prayer and found nothing. He looked at the image of the cross and smiled. He didn't need a prayer. He glanced up and whispered, "Thank you."