

His Best Girl : A Scorpion Adventure Story

By Kate Simon

It was a beautiful day for a Saturday brunch at their favorite café. Cabe's art show had been a rousing success and they'd celebrated into the early morning. He'd woken up starving and dragged Kate's sleepy ass to Ariel's for the best omelets in the city.

"Feel better now?" asked Kate.

"At least I've regained my strength." He reached to her hand. "You wore me out, witch," he whispered.

She gave him a wink. "That's 'ma job, boyo."

Cabe tossed some bills in the leather folder. He grabbed her hand, kissed it and said, "Come on. Let's walk this off."

Kate stood still. "Walk? This is LA. No one walks in LA."

"And that's the problem. It's beautiful day. We'll walk off the meal and window shop."

"Shop?" she asked with a smile.

"Yes, love. I'll buy you something shiny."

They walked down the street, passing open air restaurants and shops. They checked out gift shops and boutiques. "Come with me." Cabe led her into a small gift shop that had a large collection of imported Irish goods. They wandered through the tables until Cabe found a small plaque with an ornate symbol with the word Draiocht.

"This is interesting. What does this word mean?" he asked the sales girl.

"It's derived from the druid. It loosely means witchcraft or witch."

Cabe laughed. "We'll take it."

The girl wrapped the plaque while smiling at Cabe. "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Kate couldn't fault the girl's taste. He did look particularly sexy in his black t-shirt and jeans that reminded her of the spectacular ass underneath the denim. He wore a silver St. Christopher medal on a long necklace most people never saw. He pulled his sunglasses off their perch on his shirt and slipped them back on as they continued their walk down the street.

"Thank you for the present," she said, giving him a kiss.

"You're welcome." Cabe stopped and looked at her. She was looking at him with a soft smile. "What?" he asked.

Kate leaned in and wrapped her arm around his waist. "Nothing. It's just you look really good today."

He returned her kiss and slipped his arm around her shoulder. "Thank you, sweetheart." They continued their walk down the street commenting on the various displays until Cabe stopped dead in his tracks. "Dio Mio," he whispered.

"What?" asked Kate. They were standing in front of a classic car showroom and Cabe looked like he'd just seen heaven. He pointed at a midnight blue car with an SS on the grill. "Do you know what that is?" He didn't wait for her to answer. "That looks like a 1970 Dodge muscle car. Oh, babe these things were amazing."

"Let's go inside."

"Oh, no. I was just looking."

"So, we'll look from inside," she said as led him into the showroom.

Cabe approached the car as if he were walking into church. "This is a beauty," he said.

"I agree," said the young salesman who approached and extended his hand. "Hi, I'm Charlie." He was in his early twenties and looked massively uncomfortable in a suit and tie. This kid belonged under the hood.

"I'm Cabe and this is my wife, Kate."

He nodded toward her, "Ma'am."

"Is this a 1970?"

"1968, completely restored with 100% original parts. Pop the hood."

Cabe smiled and released the hood. "Oh Kate, you have to see this. It's a thing of beauty."

Kate looked over his shoulder as if she actually knew what she was looking at.
"Can we take it for a drive?"

Cabe looked up from the engine. "Oh, no. We're just looking."

She looked at the salesman. "Did you have the keys?"

He held up his hand and the keys dangled from his fingers.

"Let's go, Gallo. I'm going for a ride with..." she looked over at the salesman.

"Charlie."

"I'm going for a ride with Charlie so unless you want me driving this baby I suggest you get in."

Charlie threw Cabe the keys and he hopped into the driver's seat. Once everyone was inside Cabe started the engine. "Oh, listen to her purr."

Kate thought Cabe's smile looked even brighter than a kid at Christmas. Charlie hit a button on a remote and a garage door opened on the side of the building. Cabe eased out on to the side street. "There's a track about a mile from here. We could take her down there so you can really open her up."

Cabe glanced over at Kate and she smiled and motioned forward. He listened to the engine rumble as they waited at a stop light. It was sweeter than music. When they got to the track Cabe opened it up, not to racing speed but to a speed faster than he's normally be able to do in heavy LA traffic. He decided not to tax Kate or Charlie's patience longer and headed back to the showroom after a few laps. He got out of the car and

tossed the keys back to Charlie. "That was great, Charlie. Thanks so much." He turned to Kate. "Are you ready to go?" She was looking at him oddly. What mischief was she thinking about? He crossed his arms and leaned up against the car and smiled, prepared to wait her out. She looked over at Charlie.

"He'll take it."

"What? No, we were just test driving it."

"He wants it."

"You never even asked how much it is."

"I don't care." She turned to Charlie again. "He wants it."

"How much is it, Charlie?"

"Fifty thousand."

"Write it up, Charlie," she said. Charlie ran off to the sales desk before Cabe could get out another objection.

"Kate, you're crazy."

She walked slowly toward him and whispered, "Get. The. Car."

"I can't just walk into a showroom and drop fifty g's on car, even one as pretty as this one."

She spoke soft and slow, like she was trying to seduce him. "Cabe, you can afford the car. You want the car. So I repeat, Get. The. Car."

"Yo Charlie! He yelled. 'Get the paperwork ."

"Yes Sir!"

Cabe laughed at the kid's excitement. He would probably make his month in commission. "Kate, you know this is crazy."

She kissed his cheek and whispered, "Oh, you ain't seen nothin' yet."

Driving the Dodge home was a blast. He even revved the engine at a red light causing the guy in the Camry next to him turn green with envy. He looked over at Kate smiling at him from the passenger seat. She still had the 'I'm up to no good' smile on her face. Cabe had to admit driving this car with his girl at his side was a teenage dream come true.

"You could have driven the our car home instead of having Charlie deliver it."

"He would have delivered the Dodge, it wasn't a problem for him. He'll deliver after they close today. And I wanted to ride with you."

He reached over and grabbed her hand. "I'm glad you did." He pulled into the garage and the door closed behind them. "I've gotta admit, I'm glad you convinced me to buy this." He reached for the door handle but Kate grabbed his hand.

"Wait," she said. She reached underneath her sundress and slipped off her pink lace panty and hung it on the rear view mirror.

"What are you doing?"

"Better than fuzzy dice, don't you think? Now, push your seat back."

"What?"

"Just do it," she whispered.

He complied and she positioned herself facing him, her knees on either side of his hips. She put her hands to his face and gave him a deeply passionate kiss. "Not that I mind, but what was that for?"

Kate leaned back and rubbed her hands down his shoulders to his chest. "Seeing you dressed like this, leaning up against the car. Your arms looked so...she traced his biceps with her hands. You are flat out the hottest thing I've ever seen," she whispered as she kissed him again. "You look better than every bad boy fantasy I've ever had." She

kissed his neck. "It was all I could do not to ask you to have me right there on the hood of the car."

"Oh, really?" he smiled as her rubbed his hands down her back.

"God, yes," she said. "I say we christen this baby the right way," she leaned in and nipped his ear. "The way a bad boy should." She reached her hand down and stroked him through his jeans. "Umm, I think you're beginning to like this idea."

"You're crazy, woman."

"You just noticed?" she smiled. Kate reached for his belt buckle and unfastened it.

"You're serious?" he asked.

She took his hand and reached it up her skirt. "Does that feel serious?"

"Holy crap. You're extremely serious."

Kate kissed him again and then whispered, "No more talking." She unzipped him and tugged at his jeans. She pulled them and his boxers down. She wrapped her hand around him and stroked him. He reclined the seat a bit as she took him in. "Oh, God," she whispered. "Damn, you feel so good." He reached his hands under her skirt to hold onto her ass. He moved her hips up and down watching her lost in bliss. It was the hottest thing he'd ever seen. He accelerated the pace until they were both lost in the moment. Their cries echoed off the garage walls.

Cabe pulled her close while they caught their breath.

Kate raised herself up and smiled. "I'm really glad you bought this car."

"Wake up, sleepyhead," said Cabe.

"Go away," said Kate as she tossed a spare pillow over her head.

He pulled back the covers and swatted her ass. "Come on. Cooper wants us both at the garage. Now get up."

She threw the covers off and huffed. "I'm supposed to be retired."

"Hey, you knew what would happen when you took back your badge." She stood on shaky legs. "Woah," she said as she steadied herself on the bed.

Cabe came to her side. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." She smiled at him. "It's just someone turned my muscles into pudding."

He slipped his arms around her waist. "And whose fault is that? Somebody wanted to break in the new car."

She gave him a kiss. "It was worth it." She headed toward the bathroom. "I need a shower, care to join me?"

"We need to be in the garage in less than an hour. If I join you in there we'll be late."

"Spoil sport."

He laughed. "Go. Shower. I'll start the coffee."

"Let's take the Dodge," Kate said as they entered the garage.

"It's not exactly my government car."

She smiled. "You know you're dying to show it to Happy."

Cabe got his ‘kid at Christmas’ grin. “Yeah, I kind of am.” He pulled her pink panties from off the rear view mirror. “I don’t think anyone needs to see these.”

Kate smiled and stuffed them in her purse. “Spoil sport.”

They pulled up at the garage and pulled into the open bay. He looked over at Kate. “This is gonna be good.” They got out of the car to see the others approaching.

“What’s this?” asked Paige.

“Cabe’s new toy” said Kate.

Happy approached the car slowly, walking around it and touching it carefully like she was touching a mirage. “1968 Dodge muscle, 350 V8?” she asked.

“396,” he replied.

“Oh, sexy,” she said.

Toby walked up to the car. “Agreed.” He caught a sly smile from Kate to Cabe, who tilted his head down to try and hide a slight blush. “Seriously?” he asked. He walked over to Kate, knowing Cabe would never answer him and probably deck him for good measure. He leaned closed so only Kate would hear him. “So, you two crazy kids christened the back seat?”

Kate smiled and whispered, “Front seat.”

Toby stared at Kate as she walked toward the coffee table with a Cheshire Cat grin. As a psychiatrist he found their relationship fascinating. Standard norms for a relationship between people their age seemed not to apply. As a man he wanted to know Cabe’s secret. He would give anything to put that kind of smile on Happy’s face.

Cabe popped the hood so Happy could get a view of the engine. “When we get a break I’ll take you to the track. We can see what she’s got.”

Happy smiled, “Let’s go, boss!”

"We can't. Cooper will be here any minute."

"That minute is now." The team turned to see Katherine Cooper standing there with an arm full of files. The team took seats as Katherine handed each a file. In these files you'll find information on Price Computing International"

"Price? They're Rimark's biggest competitor," said Kate.

"Price has developed a new tracking software for the military that can not only track incoming missiles but troops and hardware on the ground."

"That exists now," said Walter.

"Yes, but this software is also predictive. It can also accurately predict where the next deployment of resources will be."

"Must be an extremely complex algorithm," said Sly.

"Yes. we've picked up chatter that someone within Price is shopping it around to our adversaries. I don't have to tell you what that would mean for the security of our troops not to mention the nation as a whole."

"Any enemy nation or terrorist group could predict where we'll be at any given time," said Cabe. "Preemptive strikes."

"Exactly," said Katherine. "We need someone to go in and find the leak."

"Director, Scorpion did several projects for Price," said Walter.

"Excuse me?" asked Kate.

"Over a year ago, before you worked with us," said Sly.

"Yes, I'm aware."

"That's why you need me," said Kate.

"Yes. Since Scorpion is known to Price personnel they will have to support from outside."

"Aren't you forgetting something? Kate owns their primary competition. They're bound to know her too," said Cabe.

"Not necessarily. Trent Price might know me. I've encountered him a few times. He's an ass, but a very clever one. Since I don't have day to day contact with Rimark most of Price's people won't know who I am. Hell, most of Rimark employees couldn't pick me out of a lineup. I can also make a few adjustments that could compensate for any 'Don't I know you from somewhere' questions," said Kate.

"I don't like it, Kate. It's risky," said Cabe.

"I'll have you and the team to back me up. I'll be fine" She reached over for his hand. "We can't let this happen and you know it."

He sighed. "I know, but that doesn't mean I don't hate it."

"Walter, what do you think," asked Kate. She may control Rimark but she never tried to control Scorpion.

"I think it's doable. We can back you up from the outside. Surveillance, running analytics. Toby will profile any suspects."

"Sounds like a plan," said Katherine. "You'll be going in as Kathleen Shaw, who was hired, by a temp agency to cover for the assistant to the IT director ,who suddenly quit to take a very lucrative offer with the government."

"You were pretty confident I'd take the assignment."

"Yeah. I know you and this team. You'd never let something like this go unchallenged." Katherine smiled. "Okay, that's all. Kathleen is due to start work tomorrow morning."

Cabe waited until Katherine left before he pulled Kate aside. "Sweetheart, seriously. I don't like this. It feels wrong."

"Cabe, I will have all of you there to back me up."

He nodded his agreement but something told him he shouldn't let her go. He also knew he could never stop her.

Cabe came home, still nervous, despite the mission prep work. Kate left early to make what ever changes she thought would make her The Ghost once more. "Kate, I'm home."

"I'll be right down."

"Do you want to call for takeout. Chinese or..." He froze mid-sentence. Kate stood before him smiling, at least he thought it was her. Her dark red hair was now jet black and when he looked close he saw her hazel eyes were now a clear blue. "What the...what did you do to your hair?"

"Don't worry, it's not permanent. I learned early not to try and fight my Irish features so sometimes I run with it. The hair and the blue eyes make me a Black Irish. Not all that unusual and pretty far from my own look." She did a little turn. "What do you think?"

"Wow, I don't know. You look so different. For a second I thought someone else was in the house."

"That's great. It means the look works."

Cabe smiled. "Oh, it works, alright. But I thought the idea was not to be noticed?" He walked to her and ran his hands through her now black hair. "Sweetheart, any man with a pulse is going to notice you."

Kate laughed. "I love you Gallo, but trust me. No one ever notices me. No one but you." She leaned in and gave him a soft kiss.

He pulled her close. "Let's keep it that way." He gave her a deeply passionate kiss. He pulled back and looked into his wife's blue eyes. "This is very disconcerting. It feels like I'm cheating on my wife, with my wife. This is all very strange."

"Well, Gallo. This may be a 'having your cake and eating it too' situation."

Cabe stroked her hair and smiled. "No matter what color your hair or eyes, you're still my Katie girl."

Kate smiled. "Always am, Always will be."

Cabe woke up with the same unease that plagued him the day before. Something about this job didn't sit well with him. He imagined it was because he'd had to watch her deal with the aftermath of the UN shootings. Despite the fact that she'd had a few sessions with Toby after the shootings, she still had nightmares. They weren't as frequent as they were at first, but no one carried the knowledge they killed three people easily. Especially not his Katie.

He watched her as she slept and smiled. She never was a morning person. He decided to wake her the only that guaranteed he wouldn't get hit with a pillow. He leaned in and kissed her wounded shoulder. His Katie girl had been through so much in the last year. He moved closer and kissed her neck.

"Mmmmm. Good morning," Kate said.

"Good morning," he replied as he continued trailing kisses down her neck. He reached his hand over her stomach, caressing her smooth skin. He loved that his shy girl had found enough confidence in herself in his love for her to be comfortable naked.

She rolled on her back and smiled up at him. "Somebody's up early."

He caressed her cheek. "I love you so much, Kate." Kate stilled and studied him. He knew she could read him like a book.

"I love you too, Cabe."

He kissed her, soft at first, then deeply, passionately. He positioned himself over her, traveling down her body, kissing her, tasting her. Only when she'd shuddered, calling his name, did he slip inside, losing himself in her.

They met the team at the garage for a last minute briefing before the mission.

"Oh, my gosh, Kate. You look so different," said Paige.

Kate smiled, "That's the idea." She had pulled her now black hair into a low ponytail. She wore a nondescript oxford shirt and black slacks.

Happy handed Kate a pair of black horn rimmed glasses. She pointed to a screw at the arm of the glasses. This is a micro camera. We'll be able to see everything you see." She looked at Kate as she put the glasses on. "Weren't your eyes green?"

"Contacts."

Happy nodded. "Effective."

Walter flipped a switch on his laptop and a view of the garage appeared on the screen. "The glasses are functioning. Good work, Happy."

Happy and Walter rode with Cabe and Kate in the van. Toby and Sly stayed back at the garage and would keep Cooper up to date. Sly would have use of the more powerful computers at the garage. Toby could profile suspects remotely and Cabe was too unsettled to deal with Toby's nonstop mouth in the confines of the van.

Kate put in her com and adjusted her glasses. "Are we good?"

"We have a visual," said Happy.

"Same here," said Toby.

Kate reached for the handle. "Okay. Let's do this."

Cabe grabbed her hand. "Kate, I'll be right here around the corner. If anything looks like it's going south, I'm coming in after you."

"Cabe, I'll be fine." Kate touched his cheek and pulled him close for a kiss. "I promise."

Watching his wife work was an amazing experience. When she'd walked into the conference room at the UN, dressed as an EMT, she was a Brooklyn woman with attitude. Now she was a soft spoken tech geek who was quietly working her monitor. She'd loaded two screens on the terminal. One screen was to make it look like she was working on the assignment the It director had given her. She'd actually completed the assignment, find a flaw in some printing software, three hours ago. She flipped to the working screen whenever someone walked by her desk. The second screen was the real work, sorting through thousands of communications to find the traitor. Most of Price's systems were airgapped, meaning they were self contained and could not be breached from the outside. Kate had been working for nearly four hours, searching line after line of code.

"Cabe, why don't you take a break?" asked Happy. "Walter and I will let you know if anything happens."

"No," he said without looking away from the monitor he'd been watching the entire four hours.

"Oh, crap," Kate whispered.

"What is it?" asked Cabe.

"You know that alert software Elena Marcos had?"

"The program that alerted her if specific files were accessed," said Walter.

"Trent Price has a similar program linked to several files, including some I've already accessed."

"Kate, he'll know he's been compromised. You need to get out of there now!" yelled Cabe.

"It will take him a few minutes to figure out where the breech is coming from. I need the proof of what he's done. Now it's just a bunch of protected files."

Cabe ran his hand through his hair. His wife was a very stubborn woman. "Damn it Kate! Get out of there, now!"

"Well what do we have here?"

Cabe watched through the camera as Kate looked up at a tall man, standing in front of her desk.

"Kate Riley, it's been a while."

"Hello, Trent."

"Is that how you're keeping Rimark afloat? A little industrial espionage?" He walked to the side of her desk and she looked down, revealing Price was carrying a gun. "Get up, now."

Kate stood and walked ahead of Price as he pushed her toward a room on the back of the floor. When he opened the door and closed it behind them, the video and audio feeds cut out.

"What the hell? Walter what happened to the feed?" yelled Cabe.

"There must be an electronic damping field around the room."

Cabe drew his gun and reached for the door.

"Cabe, wait," yelled Toby. "If this is our guy he'll betray his country for money which means he won't hesitate to kill her. If you go in there guns blazing you'll put her at risk."

"I'm getting her out of there."

"Cabe," Toby said calmly. "Think about it. You know I'm right. Kate is a trained agent. She realizes what this guy is capable of."

Cabe took a breath. "Fine. I'm still going in, but I'll won't go head on. Make sure Cooper has back up on site."

"Be careful," said Happy.

Cabe nodded to her as he closed the door and ran toward the Price building. The only way up to the tenth floor without being detected was the stairwell door that was controlled by the receptionist. He was suddenly glad Price put its faith in electronics and not live guards who'd be harder to circumvent. He approached the receptionist and flashed his badge. He spoke slowly and deliberately. "I'm Special Agent Cabe Gallo from Homeland Security. Here's what's about to happen. You're going to buzz me in the stairwell and you are not going to tell anyone I'm here. You're going to sit here quietly," He paused and looked at her name plate. "You're going to sit here quietly, Karen, and wait for the team of Homeland Agents that will be here very shortly. You will then give them access to this building."

The young girl blanched. "I just can't let you upstairs. I lose my job."

"Sweetheart, you can lose your job or you can go to jail. What'll it be?"

The girl hit a button and the stairwell door buzzed.

"Good choice," he said as he pulled open the door and started up the stairs. He was praying he could get up the ten flights before Price killed Kate. "Walter, are you following me?"

"Yes, I see you passing the second floor."

"Have far out is the back up team?

"Cooper said ten minutes."

"I hope it's enough."

Kate knew Cabe would be on his way. She just had to keep Trent talking. The longer he talked the longer she had before he shot her.

"A gun, Trent? Isn't that a little low rent, for you?"

"Shut up, bitch! The high and mighty Kate Riley. A little old to still playing off the child genius card. Is this how Rimark has stayed on top? " He sat on the edge of a desk in the sparse room. "So tell me what you were after?"

Kate thought, ' He must think I stumbled on the flagged files.' She had to stall. Cabe had to be on his way.

Trent had nearly a foot in height and at least one hundred pounds over her. This wasn't going to be easy. She walked to the other room and smiled. "Do you honestly believe I'm after your crap software?"

Trent lunged toward her and she gave him a hit to the chest and went for his gun. His strength and height overwhelmed her agility. He knocked off her off balance and drove the butt of his gun into her face. Pain exploded in her head and she collapsed on the floor. She drove her feet up into his groin. He screamed in pain and fury and fell on her, driving his fists into her chest and face. Kate tried to turn to protect herself, but he had her pinned to the floor. All she could do now was be grateful he'd lost interest in his gun and pray Cabe got to her in time.

Cabe knew he'd gotten up the ten flights quickly, but it felt like time was standing still. He had to find her. He came threw the tenth floor door with his badge out and his gun drawn. He couldn't risk the staff alerting Price, so he said, "Get on the floor. Under your desks." No one seemed to question his badge and gun and complied. He made his way to the door and heard the a man screaming obscenities. Cabe burst through the door to find Trent pounding his fists into Kate's blood covered face. Trent was too close to Kate to risk using his gun. He threw himself at Trent, knocking him to the ground and free of Kate. He looked over at his wife, her face already swelling, blood flowing from an open wound on her head. He'd never fully understood what seeing red meant until that moment.

He turned back to Trent and plowed his fist into his face. He screamed in pain, but Cabe couldn't hear him, all he could hear was the sound of his fist smashing into skin, the sound of breaking bones. Finally he heard a voice.

"Cabe, stop. stop," Kate called to him. "Cabe you'll kill him."

"He deserves it," he growled.

"It's not who we are. It's not what we do. Please stop."

Cabe stopped and took a breath. Trent Price was moaning, still breathing. Damn it.

"Get off me you animal."

Cabe shook his head. This is a guy who didn't understand the concept of poking the bear. He got off him and rolled him on his belly. He yanked his cuffs on his belt. "Trent Price you're under arrest."

"For what? I was restraining a thief!"

"You are under arrest for assault on a federal officer."

"You attacked me!"

"Not me," Cabe shouted. "Her!"

"That's Kate Riley from Rimark. She was stealing from me."

"That is Homeland Security Special Agent Kate Gallo." Cabe leaned closer so this guy would truly understand the depth of the shit he was in. "She's also my wife."

The back up team came through the door with guns drawn. Cabe flashed his badge. "Get EMT's up here now!" He turned Trent over to another agent and moved to Kate's side. "Katie, help will be here soon."

He didn't know how but she managed to smile. "I knew you'd come for me." she whispered just before she passed out.

Kate woke up to painfully bright lights. "Oh crap, that's bright."

"Katie? How do you feel?" asked Cabe.

"Peachy." She looked over at Cabe. His shirt was covered in blood and his hand was bloody and black with bruises. "What the hell, Cabe. Are you injured? You're covered in blood."

"It's not mine," he said as he reached for her hand. "Some of it belongs to Price."

"The rest is yours? Your hand is a mess."

"No sweetheart. Most of it's yours."

"I must look like hell. Get me a mirror."

He placed a delicate kiss on her head. She winced under the slight pressure. "You look alive and that's what counts."

"Wow. That bad," she tried to laugh. "What happened to Trent?"

"He's under arrest for assault and getting sown up down the hall."

"How bad did you hurt him?" she asked.

"Broken nose and a few facial cuts. Doctor said he'd be stitched up and released to Homeland's custody in a few hours."

"I didn't get enough to charge him for the illegal sales."

"Actually, Katherine said his attack on you gave them the probable cause to confiscate his files. Walter's working on cracking the encryption." Cabe sat down on the bed next to her. "What the hell happened in there?"

"I knew once it went south you wouldn't be that far behind. I knew I'd have a hard time taking him down so I went for his most vulnerable spot, his ego. I insulted him and

he came at me. I knew I couldn't disable him but if I could distract him from his gun long enough he wouldn't shoot me before you got to me."

"You were trying to get him to hit you?"

"It's easier to recover from this than a bullet."

The door opened and Dr. Hawkins entered. "How are you doing Agent Gallo?"

Kate smiled, "Which one?"

"Ladies first." She glanced at her tablet. "I was surprised when I heard they were bringing you in. I'm glad I'm not pulling a bullet out of you this time."

"Me too."

"I've ordered some scans to make sure we're not dealing with anything more than lacerations."

"Fine," said Kate "My husband needs his hand checked."

"I'm fine, Kate," said Cabe.

"Bullshit. Your hand is already black with bruises and it's swollen."

"Price had a tough skull."

Hawkins took Cabe's hand and he winced. "I'll send you for x-rays but I can tell you right now it's definitely broken."

Cabe looked at Kate. Even with one eye swollen shut, he could see her 'I told you so' look.

Cabe helped Kate into the bedroom and pulled the pain med out of his pocket. He brought her a glass of water and struggled one handed with the bottle cap. The cast would take some getting used to.

"Here, let me." Kate reached her hand for the bottle.

He hated surrendering but she was right. She popped the cap and poured out two pain killers.

"Label says one, Katie."

She handed him a pill. "One for me, one for you."

"I don't need it."

"Again, bullshit. Even with one eye shut I can see you're in pain. Take the damn pill. Get changed and get in bed. We both need the rest."

Cabe sighed. "You never tire of being right."

Kate attempted a smile. "Never."

"Fine, but first we need to get rid of these clothes." Cabe went down to the kitchen and grabbed a trash bag. By the time he got back to the bedroom Kate had stripped off her clothes and was dabbing the dried blood off her face. He froze at the sight of the bruises on her back and stomach. He knew she had a couple of broken ribs but he'd thought it was from Price sitting on her. He hadn't realized it was from punches. He was blind angry all over again.

"What the hell, Kate! Why didn't you tell me?!" He walked into the bathroom and got a closer look at the ugly marks.

"So you could beat him some more?"

"Maybe!"

She turned to face him and pointed to her bruises. "This was a calculated decision on my part. I was buying the time I knew you needed to get to me. What you did to him was driven by rage. You were wrong."

He couldn't believe what she was saying.

"You could have killed him. Rage like that could get us both killed one day. I understand what you did and I probably would have done exactly the same if the situation were reversed. If we're going to continue working together we have to keep our emotions in check." She touched her hand to his cheek. "Cabe Gallo I love you more than anyone or anything in this world. I would die to protect you and I know you would die to protect me." She tried to smile despite her swollen lip. "But tell you what, let's do our best not to let that happen. Okay?"

He couldn't stop tears filling his eyes.

"Cabe, I'll be fine. I promise. You heard Dr. Hawkins."

"Kate Gallo, I love you more than anyone or anything in this world. I would die to protect you and I know you would die to protect me. I promise to do my best not to let either one of us follow through with it." He tried to collect himself but when his beautiful wife, bruised and bloodied, wiped a tear from his cheek, he was lost. This woman who'd suffered so much today, who was in such pain, was comforting him. He stopped fighting and let the tears fall. He carefully put his arms around her and held her as close as he dared. "Katie girl, I don't have enough words for this. All I can tell you now is I love you."

"That's enough, Cabe. That will always be enough."

Cabe helped wash the rest of the dried blood from her skin and then helped her into bed. He stripped off his bloodied clothes and tossed everything in the trash bag. Grabbing the glass of water, he handed it and the pill to Kate.

"Only if you take one too," she said.

"This is your script, not mine."

"Dr. Hawkins wrote the same script for you, you just didn't fill it."

"You're infuriating, woman."

"Yeah, but you love me anyway."

Cabe smiled and took the damn pill. He opened the slider so Kate could listen to the ocean. She always said how it helped her relax. "You might be more comfortable if I slept in the guest room."

Kate looked at him like he'd just made the most ridiculous statement. She pulled back the covers and patted the bed. "Get that spectacular Italian ass of yours in this bed now, Gallo."

He smiled as he slid carefully under the covers. "Spectacular, huh?"

She reached under the covers for his good hand. "Truly spectacular."

"Umm, good to know," he whispered. He listened to the ocean as the painkiller began to take hold. They'd been lucky today. Tomorrow they'd face the weeks of recovery but tonight he'd lay here grateful he was hold the hand of his best girl.