

The Journey : A Scorpion Story  
By Kate Simon

Jonathan Gallo walked up the stairs from the beach to his parents' beach house. His house was a short walk down the beach so he made this trip almost every day. He'd only found his father a year ago and spending time with him was one of his favorite things to do. They were so much alike Kate said it was scary. His father's wife had become more of a mother to him than his own mother ever had. He loved Kate so much that he's asked her to adopt him. He glanced down at the scar on his leg. Publicly acknowledging Cabe and Kate as his father and mother had sent Kathleen over the edge. She hired thugs to kidnap him and his father. He would have died from a gunshot wound if Kate and the Scorpion team hadn't used their considerable skills to find them. Now Kathleen was right where she belonged, in a federal prison. He pushed thoughts of Kathleen from his head as he opened the patio screen. "Mom? Dad?" he called.

"I'm in the kitchen, sweetheart," Kate answered.

He walked into the kitchen and kissed her on the cheek. "Hi. Where's Dad?"

"He's in the studio. Go get him. Breakfast is ready."

"I want to talk to you first."

"What's up?"

"You know that conference you're going to next month?"

"I'm the keynote speaker."

"Knowing how supportive Dad is I assume he's going with you."

"Yes. That's the plan."

"You know he doesn't understand any of it, anymore than I do."

Kate smiled. "Yeah, I'm afraid he'll start snoring in the middle of my speech."

"Would you be upset if I asked Dad to go on a trip with me?"

She put her hands on her hips. "Did your father ask you to get him out of this?"

Jonathan put his hands up. "No. I swear."

"Okay, I wouldn't have to worry about him being bored out of his mind. Where do you want to go?"

"Italy."

"Who's going to Italy?" They turned to see Cabe standing in the doorway.

Jonathan smiled. "Hopefully, you and me."

"What?"

“I know Mom is speaking at the conference next month. I thought we could go then.” Jonathan smiled. “I’d like to go to Genoa.”

“Genoa? That’s where my grandparents were born.”

“I thought we could trace our roots.”

“I don’t know,” said Cabe. “Kate, I promised to go to the conference with you.”

Kate laughed and slipped her arms around his waist. “Cabe, you know you’d be bored out of mind. I appreciate that you want to be there to support me but I think you should go with Jonathan.”

“Are you sure?”

“I might ask Ralph and Paige to go with me. I know Ralph would enjoy it.”

Cabe looked at his son. “I guess I’m going to Italy.”

“Yes!” said Jonathan.

“The conference is only a weekend. I assume you want to go longer than a weekend,” said Cabe.

“Do you think Homeland could do without you for two weeks?”

Cabe stood at the check in, still nervous about leaving the team for two weeks. He was looking forward to spending time with his son and brushing up on his Italian.

“Will you relax?” said Kate.

“What?”

“Cabe Gallo, you know you can’t hide anything from me.”

“Yeah, yeah, pane of glass. I know.”

“You’re nervous. I will be back with the team Monday morning. There aren’t any jobs planned than require more than just security.”

“They always start that way and end up on the brink of world destruction.”

“And I’ve already promised to call Homeland for backup if needed.”

“Dad, trust Mom. She’s a badass agent. You know that. If she needs help she’ll ask for it.” Jonathan was smiling at both his parents.

“You’re just trying to get points with your mother.”

Jonathan threw up his hands. “Hey, you never know when they’ll come in handy.”

All three checked in for their flights. Kate’s flight was at a terminal four, not far from the international terminal. They walked towards the trains that would take them to their flights.

“Do you have your passports?” asked Kate.

“Mom, you’ve checked twice. We’re all set.”

“I’m sorry, I worry. It’s my job.”

Cabe ran his hand up her arm. “Katie, I promise, we’ll be okay.”

“This is my terminal,” she said. Cabe nodded to Jonathan and they followed her out to the hallway. “What are you doing?”

“We can get back on the next train. We have time.” Cabe wrapped his arms around his wife. They’d made the most of their morning but this, this was different. They’d never been apart longer than a few days since they met. He held her tight and whispered in her ear. “I love you, witch. I’ll come home to you soon.”

She smiled and whispered in his ear in her Irish brogue, “You better, boyo. You’ll have some penance to do for being gone from me so long.”

Cabe grinned. “I can’t wait.”

Jonathan let out a whine. "Come on, guys. You two don't whisper near as quiet as you think you do!"

Cabe laughed at his son and then turned and gave Kate a passionate kiss. "Will that do, witch?"

"I'll take it as payment in advance, boyo."

"Mom, Dad, we're in the middle of LAX!"

Kate laughed. "I keep telling you to be grateful. You're exactly like your father so you are going to make some woman very happy one day," She gave her husband a lustful glance and sighed. "Oh yeah, very happy." She held out her arms. "Now come here and give your mother a kiss." Jonathan kissed her cheek as he gave her a tight hug.

"I'll bring you back something pretty."

"Just bring yourself and your father back in one piece. And keep the *donne* away from your father"

"What?"

"Women," Cabe smiled. "Your mother thinks that the moment I set foot in Italy I will be inundated with offers."

"Don't worry, Mom. I'll keep him safe."

Kate's phone beeped and she pulled it out. "Paige and Ralph are waiting for me at the gate. I have to go."

Cabe leaned over and gave her a kiss. "Go."

She grabbed the handle of her bag and started down the hallway. She turned around. "Call me when you land."

"We will."

They waited until she turned the corner before they turned back to the train platform. "I hope I find what you and Mom have one day."

"I hope you do, too."

Cabe was surprised when his son handed him his ticket. He saw they were in the front of the plane. "Jonathan, is this a first class ticket?"

"It's a long flight. You want to be comfortable."

"These things are insanely expensive."

“Dad, are you forgetting? Old family money. Except for my house, I almost never spend it.” Cabe pulled out his phone and starting googling. “Are you looking up how much these cost?” He pulled the phone from Cabe’s hand. “Oh no, no. Since when do you look up the price of a gift?”

“You’re right. I’m sorry.”

“You’ll be glad when we’re into hour six of a thirteen hour flight.”

Cabe smiled but he was still concerned. Jonathan had insisted on paying for everything. He did have all of Kathleen’s family money. Jonathan said it was fifty million but Cabe was still a little uncomfortable living in the middle of so much wealth. Kate’s genius programming had created her father’s computer company, Rimark. It left her five times as wealthy as his son. Cabe, on the other hand, grew up in a small row home in Brighton Beach. It was a completely different life.

They walked on to the plane and Cabe was floored. Each seat had a small flat screen TV. The seats were more comfortable than his recliner. They also folded out into beds. Cabe looked at his son and smiled. “Maybe this was a good idea.”

Kate settled into her seat next to Ralph. Across the aisle was Paige. Ralph had chosen his seat so they could talk during the flight. Paige didn't mind. It gave her a chance to zone out for the three hour flight to Houston with a movie on her tablet. Kate had convinced Ralph that he should deliver his paper on his data storage software at the conference. Ralph had won his lawsuit when his professor tried to claim the software as his own. Since then, Rimark had purchased the rights to the software, leaving Ralph and Paige financially set for life. Kate wanted to make the point to the gathering to go back to their roots. Coding had been the domain of the garage geek. In recent years it had become a corporate monolith, more interested in getting the maximum market share instead of advancing the technology. Ralph started to fidget in his seat as he read his tablet.

"Are you okay, Ralph?"

"Yeah," he said unconvincingly.

"Tell me what's wrong."

"I'm nervous about speaking in front of all those people. These are important people."

"So are you," said Kate. Ralph rolled his eyes. "I'm serious. You're one of the great minds of the century. Your work is going to have lasting effects for generations."

He smiled. "Just like yours."

Kate smiled and kissed the top of his head. "Thank you, sweetie."

"You're welcome, Nonna."

Kate loved when Ralph called her Nonna, the Italian word for grandmother. Cabe was Nonno and had taught him a few phrases. Ralph, Paige and the rest of their team were their family, their chosen family. She sat back and waited for take off, taking Ralph's hand when she saw how nervous he was. Just because he was a twelve year old genius, didn't mean he wasn't scared of flying.

She looked out the window and knew Cabe and Jonathan would already be in the air. It would be at least another twelve hours before she heard from them. She was glad Cabe could spend some extended quality time with their son. It didn't mean she wouldn't miss them like crazy. Her PTSD could be triggered when she woke up in an empty bed. She promised Cabe she'd be okay, after all she hadn't had an episode in at least a year.

But she'd also had never been away from him for more than a weekend. She was glad she'd given Toby a heads up as to what was going on. He'd be prepared if he got a call in the middle of the night. They got to cruising altitude and picked up the wifi signal. She turned on her tablet and saw a message from Cabe.

*"Hi sweetheart. I'm in midair and you wouldn't believe these seats. Our crazy son bought first-class tickets. These seats fold out into beds. If you were here I'd be tempted to join the mile high club. I'm looking forward to spending time with our son but I'm already missing you like crazy. I'll call you when we land. I love you. Cabe."*

Kate closed her eyes and tried to fight back the tears. She started an internal argument with herself. She was a Homeland agent with decades of experience. She'd gone into situations with world class bad guys. She could handle two weeks alone. Maybe.



The airport at Genoa looked like any other international airport with the exception of the signs in Italian. The other notable exception was he wasn't exhausted after the thirteen hour flight. Being able to sleep on the flight had been great. While it was midnight in Houston it was only seven pm in Genoa. Just in time for a nice dinner. They grabbed their luggage and headed for the escalator.

"Look for the taxi service sign," said Cabe.

"That won't be necessary," said Jonathan as he pointed to the suited driver holding a sign that read '*Gallo*'.

"You hired a limo?"

"I don't know the roads. Do you? I'd rather have someone driving who does."

Cabe smiled and shook his head. "Fine."

"Welcome to Italy, Mr. Gallo and Mr. Gallo," said the driver in heavily accented but perfect English.

"Thank you...?" asked Jonathan

"Marco."

"Thank you, Marco." He extended his hand. "I'm Jonathan and this is my father, Cabe."

Cabe shook the driver's hand. "Buona sera." The driver switched to fast paced Italian, testing the American. Cabe immediately replied in excellent Italian, how much he was looking forward to this trip with his son and exploring his family roots. He wanted to laugh at the man's surprised expression.

"Ah, English please," said Jonathan. "My father speaks Italian but I only know a few words."

"Of course, sir," Marco smiled. They all walked to limo where Marco loaded the luggage into the trunk.

During their drive Cabe looked at the areas of old town. As they continued to pass more of the city he wondered what hotel Jonathan had chosen. They finally pulled up to a beautiful hotel on the marina. It was a modern, elegant building with balconies that opened to the water. "Oh, son, this is amazing."

"Thanks. It looked like it has everything that we need to be comfortable. It's also close to the area we want to explore."

Marco followed them into the hotel and put their bags on a luggage cart. He handed a business card to Jonathan. "Here is my direct number, sir. I will be available whenever you call." Jonathan shook the man's hand and he left the lobby.

"You hired a driver for two weeks?" asked Cabe.

"Actually, it was more cost and time efficient than trying to find a driver every time we wanted to go further than a walk. You know Dad, when you're a lawyer you're a detail oriented person. I've got this."

"Fine," said Cabe. "I'll do my best to not question everything little thing."

Jonathan smiled at the desk clerk, a pretty young girl with sandy blonde hair and blue eyes. "Good evening. Gallo, checking in."

The girl gave a panicked look to either side of her and then spoke in Italian. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm just covering while the clerk who speaks English is on her dinner break."

"That's quite alright," Cabe replied in Italian. "Our name is Gallo and we're checking in."

The girl gave him a relieved smile. "I thought you were Americans. I should have known better. Your son looks just like my cousin Carlo."

"I am American but my grandparents were born in Genoa. Alfonso and Sarafina Asaro."

The girl smiled. "Oh, it's just a coincidence, then. My cousin's name is Russo."

Cabe stopped and then looked at Jonathan. "Dad, what is it?"

“My grandmother’s maiden name was Russo.”

“You don’t think...”

“Maybe.” He turned to the girl and explained his shock to the girl. “Do you think you could contact you cousin. We’d love to meet him and see if we are related. I know Russo is a common name so tell him my grandmother’s name was Sarafina. If there is a Sarafina in his family history who married Alfonso Asaro, then we are definitely related.”

“I’ll call tomorrow when I’m off. This would be very exciting,” she smiled.

“Yes it would. Thank you...?”

The girl smiled and returned Cabe’s handshake. “Sofia. Sofia Russo.”

Jonathan followed Cabe into the elevator with the luggage rack. “Do you think they could be related to us?”

“It’s possible but we shouldn’t get our hopes up. Russo is a pretty common name.”

“I’m surprised I’m seeing so many blue eyed blondes.”

“Northern Italy has a large percentage of blue eyed blondes. That’s where we get our blue eyes.”

Jonathan slipped the key card in the door and opened it for his father. Cabe walked in and gasped. “Wow.” They had a suite looking out directly out on to the water. Beautiful yachts were moored right outside their window. He walked out on the balcony and took in the magnificent view. The sun had just started to drop in the sky. Even though he was not much of a picture taker, he pulled out his phone and took a shot. Jonathan came up from behind him and put his hand on Cabe’s back.

“What do you think, Dad?”

“What do I think? I think my son is treating me like a king.”

He laughed and patted his back. “Good. That was the plan. Don’t you think you should call Mom?”

“I need to take a few pictures to send her. She’s not going to believe this.” Cabe took pictures of their living room, the marble bathroom that would rival any spa and each bedroom in the suite. He had to admit to himself, Jonathan had chosen a perfect location. “Okay, now show me how to send these to your mother.” Jonathan pressed the screen a few times and handed it back to him.

“All done. Now you better call Mom before she starts to worry.”

He was about to hit Kate’s call button when she rang him. “Hey sweetheart, I was just about to call. I take it you got the pictures.”

“They’re amazing. The place looks beautiful. It sure beats my room. I look out over a parking lot and a highway.”

Cabe laughed. “Technically speaking, so are we.”

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t try to make this better, boyo. I saw the yachts. Now, did you have a good flight?”

“I have to admit it was great. The beds are comfortable and I got in a solid six hours.”

“Eight hours,” said Jonathan.

“Really? Jonathan says it was eight hours.”

“I got to listen to you snore. It was eight.”

“How are Paige and Ralph?”

“Good. Ralph is nervous about his presentation but I think it will go fine. He’s going to need to get used to it. With the career he has ahead of him this presentation will be the first of many. Okay, let me talk to my son.” Cabe handed the phone to Jonathan.

“Hi Mom.”

“Hi, sweetheart. Did you enjoy your flight?”

“You mean after I got used to Dad’s snoring? Yeah, it was good.”

“The hotel looks beautiful.”

Jonathan looked at his father. “I wanted it to be special. Something we’d both remember.”

“He got a suite,” Cabe yelled.

“You’re taking good care of him.”

“I’m doing my best, Mom. Oh, we may have already found a lead in the family history. The desk clerk may be related to us.”

“Uh huh,” she muttered.

“No really. She said her cousin looks just like me.”

“Uh huh.”

Jonathan looked at Cabe. “You talk to her. She doesn’t believe me.”

Cabe took the phone back and smiled. “It’s true, Katie. Her name is Russo. That was my grandmother’s maiden name.”

“It looks like the donne may be after both of you.”

Cabe looked up at Jonathan. “Excuse me.” He walked into the bedroom and closed the door. “Katie, where is this coming from? You know we’re here to look into my family roots. You also know me well enough to know I’d never look at another woman so tell me, what is going on?”

She sighed and took a deep breath. “I’m sorry. Of course I know better.”

“You’re not getting off that easy. Tell me.”

“I think it just hit me. I’m climbing into bed alone and you’re thousands of miles away. I miss you.”

“Sweetheart, I asked if you were okay for me to go.”

“I am. Really. It’s just...”

“I know. I feel the same way. We’ve been together almost constantly for three years. This is going to take some getting used to.”

“You’re right.”

“You’re in bed, right?”

“Yeah?”

“Nightgown?”

“Cabe Gallo, are you...?”

“Nightgown or not?”

“Not.” Cabe heard Kate giggle and he proceeded to take her mind off being alone. After twenty minutes Jonathan knocked on the door.

“Dad, did you fall asleep? I’m hungry and I made reservations.”

“I need a minute,” he called back. “Your son wants his dinner,” he said into the phone.

“Ummm. Okay. You have a good night. I think I can sleep now.”

“I love you, Katie girl.”

“I love you too, boyo.”

Cabe quickly changed his clothes but couldn’t hide his flushed complexion. “Okay let’s eat.”

“What were you two talking about all that...” Jonathan saw his father blush. “Oh geez, Dad. Don’t you two ever take a break?”

Cabe laughed and patted his son on the back. “Nope.”

Paige and Kate sat poolside while they watched Ralph swim laps. He'd gotten quite good since he'd first learned how to swim in Cabe and Kate's pool. "How is he feeling about tomorrow?"

"He says he's okay but I think he's nervous," said Paige.

"I'll be right next to him on the dais."

"Do you think he's ready for this?"

"I'm sure his work is. I think once the crowd accepts him, he'll do fine."

"I hope you're right."

"Once they understand what Ralph is capable of, he's going to get a lot of job offers."

"Oh, no. He's staying put. He may be a genius and nearly ready to graduate from Cal-Tech but he's still only thirteen. He's staying put. Besides, you said you want him to work for Rimark when he's ready."

"You know I would never stand in his way," said Kate.

"Stand in who's way?" Ralph was standing next to them, drying himself off.

"Stand in your way, Ralph," said Kate. "Once these people see what you can do they're going to want to hire you."

"You said you wanted me to work at Rimark."

"Oh, I do. That hasn't changed. But these people might have interesting offers for you. You are not obligated to me or Rimark."

Ralph sat next to her on her chaise lounge. "Nonna, I know I'm not obligated but, it's like you and Nonno have always told me, we're family. I want to work at Rimark. You have some great people there. We've been working on interesting things and I want to keep working with them."

Kate gave Ralph a hug. "Thank you, sweetheart."

“But no full time work until I say so,” said Paige. “You’re still only thirteen. I want you to have a life.”

“I still have my work with Scorpion.”

“Only as needed.”

“Yes, Mom.”

“Now lets go upstairs and get changed.” Paige picked up her beach bag. “Meet you for dinner?”

“I made reservations for six o’clock.”

“See you then.”



Cabe sat on the patio of their hotel suite and sipped his coffee. He had a beautiful view of the boats sailing out of the harbor to the Ligurian Sea.

“Good morning, Dad.”

“Good morning. Did you sleep well?”

Jonathan sat down in the next chair with his coffee. “I did.” He took a sip of his coffee. “I could get used to this.”

“It is beautiful, but I think your mother would have something to say about it.”

“Yeah, she is pretty set on keeping me close.”

“Does that bother you?”

“Honestly, no. Until the two of you, my family couldn’t have cared less about me. I was just a prop for their lifestyle.”

“Uh huh,” said Cabe.

“What? It really doesn’t bother me. I love Mom and you. I love being around both of you.”

“Jonathan, it’s been long enough for me to know when you’re not telling me everything.”

Jonathan held his head down. “You know, sometimes it’s a pain that you’re a cop.”

“Tell me.”

“Dad, do you think you could get Mom stop grilling me about my love life? She always asks who I’m dating. If I have more than one date with someone she’s planning a wedding.”

Cabe laughed. “Son, there’s not a chance in hell. Kate is a perfectionist. When she was just your stepmother she wanted to be the best stepmother in the world. She wanted to give you all the love and attention you never got from the Ellsworths.”

“And she did, Dad. I love her for it.”

“But now she’s your actual, legal mother. She’s taken what she sees as her mothering duties to a whole different level.”

“I know. Do you think you could get her to stop talking grandchildren until I have more than two dates with someone?”

“I’ll work on her, son.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

Kate smiled at the sight of Ralph in a suit and tie. “You look so grown up.”

“Doesn’t he?” said Paige with a hitch in her voice.

Ralph pulled at his jacket sleeves and looked up at his mother. “Are you sure I look okay?”

“You look fine, Ralph,” said Paige.

“Ralph, your suit will look better than most of the people at the conference. Your mother has excellent taste in clothes. She picked something that is fashionable but not over the top. You could model for GQ.”

“We should get going. Kate you’re supposed speak in ten minutes.”

Kate stood in the wings waiting for her introduction. She was known as the owner of Rimark and some of them would know her as a Homeland agent. After today, they would all know. She smiled to herself. After today, undercover work would be impossible. She’d still work with Scorpion as a Homeland liaison. No more Ghost infiltrations, and she was damn glad about it. She had a family now, a husband and a son she adored. And maybe grandchildren.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome the CEO of Rimark Industries, Kate Riley.”

She walked to the center of the stage and shook the moderators hand. She stood for a moment to acknowledge the applause. “Thank you for that warm welcome.” She turned and saw her company’s logo and her title, Kate Riley, CEO. She pointed to the screen. “If you don’t mind I’m going to make a small change to that.” She swept the screen on her tablet. The screen changed. The logo remained the same but her name changed to Kate Gallo. “I was married last year,” she said with a broad smile. She acknowledged the applause and then swiped the screen again. The new screen was a picture of her Homeland badge. She heard a few gasps and a few chuckles. “This is not a photo shop. I am also Special Agent Kate Gallo, Homeland Security.” Now along with the gasps she heard some ‘Uh O’s’ “Now before you all panic that I’m here in my government capacity, I’m not. What I am here for is to explore the avenues of technology and revenue streams

we've been ignoring. My father founded Rimark based on my encryption programming. Over the years I did some work for Rimark but most of my work was in law enforcement, first for the FBI and then for Homeland. Yes, some of my work and the work of some members of this conference has been for the government. I am not here to promote or disparage that work. I believe serving our country is a noble pursuit. If I didn't I wouldn't have done it for thirty years."

She took a sip of water and swiped the tablet screen. "What I'm here to discuss are applications that are of service. I have recently purchased the rights to an application that is far beyond anything that exists today in data transfer and storage." She swiped the tablet screen and a typical flash drive appeared on the screen. "This is a one terabyte flash drive. It's available in every electronics, drug store and supermarket." She swiped the screen and another flash drive appeared, front and back views. On the front view was printed Dineen, on the back, Rimark. "This is the Dineen Drive and it will revolutionize data transfer and storage. The Dineen Drive can transfer and store fifteen terabytes of data in five point nine seconds. That's the same amount of data in the Library of Congress, all on a flash drive hanging from a keychain." Kate smiled at the murmurs of the crowd. "I'm sure you can all appreciate what this means for our industry. The designer of the Dineen Drive came to me with a idea. Imagine what would happen if schools all over the world who have no access to the internet had access to all it's information. Computer technology, science, mathematics, physics, the arts. We could change the world. Rimark industries is starting the Dineen Initiative and you are the people who can make it real. I'm going to ask each company to at first donate the time of some their employees to brainstorm how to make this Initiative work."

"At first," yelled Todd Perkins from Wolfe Technologies.

Kate laughed. "Yes, Todd, at first. Eventually I will be asking for product contributions but everyone in this room knows your generous nature." Todd smiled while everyone else rolled their eyes. Perkins was known for giving out games to schools that turned twelve year olds into his primary market. "Now I'd like to turn the podium to the creator of the Dineen Data Transfer System and the Dineen Initiative, Ralph Dineen." Everyone was looking around the room for this mysterious Mr. Dineen. Kate looked down

at Paige and Ralph's table. Paige covered Ralph's hand with hers and nodded. Ralph stood and started to the stage. Ralph stood next to Kate and she rubbed her hand on his shoulder. "I'll be right here," she whispered.

"Thanks Nonna."

Kate turned to the crowd. "Ladies and gentleman, I would like to present the future of computer technology, Ralph Dineen."

Ralph stood at the podium and tried to hide his nervousness. He was as prepared for this presentation as he'd been for anything but he could see the doubt on the faces in the room.

"Are you kidding us, Kate?" yelled Perkins. "This kid can't be any older than twelve."

"I'm thirteen, Mr. Perkins and I assure you I am more than qualified to speak at this gathering. I designed the Super Sly and Law Man video games for Galactic Toys. They were the best selling games in Galactic's history. I also designed the Dineen Drive."

"But, you're thirteen," said Perkins.

"We've established that. Let's move on."

"You're just a kid. You expect us to make corporate decisions based on your opinions?"

Ralph glanced down at Nonna. She looked ready to jump over the dais and throttle Perkins. She was like that for family. She'd do anything to protect them, and that included Ralph. He smiled and looked at Perkins. "Well, Mr. Perkins, considering Wolfe Technologies has been down ten percent in each of the last three quarters, I'd think you want to listen to some new ideas." The crowd barely suppressed chuckles and Perkins flushed bright red. He heard Nonna whisper to him.

"Good one."

“Let’s proceed. What I am proposing is that each company elect one representative for the panel of the Dineen Initiative.” He swept the screen and displayed a large pie chart. “The first stage will be to decide what material will be made available on the drives. The second stage is selection of schools to receive the data. This stage will also include determining the hardware needed. The final stage will be determining and implementing methods of distribution.” A hand went up and Ralph recognized him from his research of the attendees. “Yes, Mr. Carey?”

“How do you know me?”

“I did my homework.” Ralph saw smiles and heard a few chuckles.

“I understand the benefits of what you’re suggesting but...Mrs. Gallo,” he said with emphasis “ mentioned new technologies and revenue streams. Few of our companies have the resources of Rimark. Where do the benefits fit in this equation.”

“That’s an excellent question.” Ralph swept the screen and showed a chart of tax deductions. “The salaries and benefits you pay to members of the panel while they are working for the Dineen Initiative are tax deductible. Any hardware donated is also tax deductible. The revenue stream will come with the new talent discovered. I was fortunate. I was discovered by Walter O’Brien, the head of Team Scorpion.” Ralph paused for effect. Everyone knew Walter. “He and the team,” he turned to Kate and smiled, “Including Special Agents Kate and Cabe Gallo, helped me reach my potential.”

“Not every kid is a genius, like you,” said Carey.

“That’s true. But I’m not suggesting these schools be just for children. We want continuing education schools to be included. We could find a whole new workforce that had been untapped.”

“Honestly,” Carey continued, “even if all that happens exactly as you predict, the percentages of finding new and creative coders is low. Where would you find the revenue stream?”

“How many of you use that blue dish washing liquid?” He noticed everyone looking at each other as if he’d gone off the rails. “You know, the one that advertises how they

help animals affected by oil spills.” He smiled when hands started going up. “When consumers see the social responsibility of companies they are more likely to purchase their products. I’ve also mapped out a plan for the consumers to nominate and sponsor schools.” He took a sip of water. “We help open up the world to people who would otherwise be denied access. We improve their lives. We discover new talent and new ideas and our consumers will see companies that are trying to make the world better. Statistics prove the consumer is more likely to purchase from these companies. So, the entire scenario is a win/win.” The applause started small but grew into a standing ovation. Ralph looked at his Mom who was wiping tears from her eyes. Nonna was smiling with pride. He took a deep breath and could finally relax.

“Will you be sharing the Dineen Drive technology?” asked Perkins once the applause died down.

Nonna stood next to him. “I’ve got this.” She looked at Perkins and smiled. “That would be no. We will share the devices. The drive itself will retail for only five hundred dollars but the key is you need a hard drive fast enough to handle the data. The retail on the package is five thousand. We will, however, share the devices for cost with any company willing to participate in the Dineen Initiative.”

“Aren’t you worried we’ll copy the tech,” asked Perkins.

“Todd, the drive alone has two hundred and fifty million lines of code. You could try but your head would explode. Also Rimark has already copywrited the technology.” She smiled at Ralph and looked back at the crowd. “Alright, you’ve heard Ralph’s plan. The question is who’s in?” Ralph grinned from ear to ear when everyone stood.

“Just one question, Ralph,” said Carey. “Do you want a job?”

“Thank you, Mr. Carey but my Mom won’t let me work full time yet. When I can I’ll be working for Nonna.”

“Nonna?” asked Carey.

“That’s me,” said Kate. “That’s Italian for grandmother. My husband is Italian and Ralph calls us Nonno and Nonna.” She stopped, looked around the room and pointed.

“The first person who makes a crack about my age gets their phone turned into an expensive paperweight.”



Jonathan called their driver, Marco, and had him meet them in the lobby of their hotel. As they headed toward the front door they were called over to the front desk. “Excuse me, are you Mr. Gallo?” asked the desk clerk in English.

“Yes, we both are.”

“Oh, excellent. Our night clerk, Sofia called. She said her cousin Carlo has some information for you and he will meet you at noon at the town square in Carignano.”

“Dad, isn’t that...?”

“The neighborhood where my grandparents lived.”

Jonathan looked at the man’s name tag. “Anthony, Sofia was kind enough to help us with our exploring our family history.”

“I assumed as much. She sent me Carlo’s picture so you would know who you were looking for.” The man smiled and turned his phone towards them. Jonathan gasped.

“What is it Toby always says?”

“I love DNA,” Cabe replied as he look at a picture of a young man who could be Jonathan’s twin brother. His hair was a little long and he was wearing a button down shirt over a blue t-shirt. He had the same blue eyes as Cabe.

Anthony smiled. “I doubt Carlo will have any trouble finding you.”

They got into the limo and told Marco to take them Carignano. “There are a lot of beautiful buildings in Carignano. Mason’s have learned their trade in Carignano for centuries.”

“My grandfather was a mason.”

“Oh, this all makes sense. You should go to the cathedral. They’ll have the town records.”

“We have someone who’s meeting us at the town square at noon. We think he’s going to be able to help us.”

“That’s excellent. The church is just off the square.”

Cabe smiled. "Then I guess we're going to church."

Cabe and Jonathan stood in front of Santa Maria Assunta and tried to take it all in. Marble statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul on either side of the massive doors. On top of the door was a marble statue of Mary ascending to heaven surrounded by angels. The façade was covered in an adobe colored stucco and marble columns. A marble plaque was engraved 1522.

"Should we go in?" asked Jonathan.

"We've come all this way." Cabe walked up the marble steps and opened the door. He was overwhelmed at the beauty. The artwork and statues were something you'd see in the most elaborate of cathedrals in the states. This was technically a neighborhood church. But this church had been here since the fifteen hundreds.

"This is amazing," whispered Jonathan.

"Yes, it certainly is."

"Carlo, I wasn't expecting you," said a priest in Italian, as he walked toward them. As he got closer he stopped and stared at both of them. "I'm sorry I thought you were...are you related to the Russo's?"

"Hello father," Cabe replied in Italian. "I'm Cabe Gallo and this is my son Jonathan. We're Americans. My grandmother was Sarafina Russo and my grandfather was Alfonso Asaro. My son wanted to explore our family history. I apologize for my Italian. I'm very rusty."

"No, no, it's quite good," the priest responded in English. He smiled at their surprise. "I studied at Catholic University in DC. I'm Francesco Bianci." He held his hand out to Cabe and then to Jonathan. "The resemblance is astounding."

"My father and I get that a lot."

"That's true but I mean to the Russo's. I really thought you were Carlo. The Russo's and the Asaro's have been part of this community for generations."

“We are looking forward to meeting Carlo. He may have information on my family.”

“I may be able to help. We have the registry books in my office. I can go see if I can find their marriage information. Do you know the year?”

“Pre war, 1933. They came to the states shortly after my mother was born in 1935.”

“I’ll look in the registry but there is something you might like to look at if you don’t mind getting dusty. As you can imagine, maintaining a church that is six hundred years old takes a lot of work. The Asaro family are masons in Carignano. The church members volunteer their skills, including the masons, to maintain the building.”

“My grandfather was a mason.”

“Then it is a possibility.”

“What is?”

“When the men worked they took their breaks up in the dome. It has a beautiful view of the city. The men also signed the walls. You might be able to find some evidence of your grandfather up there.” The priest took some keys out of his pocket and smiled. “Follow me.” He led them to a door on the dome and unlocked it. “You go have a look and I’ll call for you if I find anything in the registry.”

“Thank you, Father,” said Jonathan.

“Just be careful up there. The stairs are almost six hundred years old.”

Cabe and Jonathan made their way up the ancient stairs to the top of the dome. “Oh Dad, look at this.”

Cabe joined his son at the window. “It’s magnificent.”

“How could they have ever left?”

“For opportunity. The pre war economy was not good and America was the land of opportunity, at least that’s what they thought. Most got to America to find a hard life but my grandfather had a friend who’d come before him. They worked together before Nonno opened his own masonry shop.”

Jonathan started looking at the walls of the dome. “Dad, look at all the names.” Cabe looked at the farthest section of the wall. It contained the latest dates, within the last few years.

“It looks like it goes from here over to the left for earlier dates,” said Cabe. He and Jonathan looked at the names and the dates. “1970, 1958, there’s nothing in the 40’s.”

“They were a little busy with World War II.”

“Oh, right.”

“Oh my God,” Cabe whispered.

“Dad, what is it?”

Cabe reached out and touched a faded signature. ‘Alfonso Asaro, 1930’. “Nonno,” he whispered. “Nonno, I found you.”

“Dad, are you okay?”

“Yeah,” he said as he wiped his cheek. “I found him. This is Alfonso Asaro, your great grandfather.”

“Wow.” Jonathan pulled his phone out of his pocket and turned on his camera. The flash startled Cabe. “I want us to have a record.”

“Of course.”

“Dad, face me and I’ll get you in the picture.” Cabe tried to smile despite the emotions that were spinning around in his head. Jonathan took another picture.

“Here, give me your phone and I’ll take your picture.” Jonathan switched places with Cabe, pointed to Nonno’s name and smiled. Cabe took the picture and handed the phone back to Jonathan. “We better get back downstairs. Father Bianci is probably looking for us.” Jonathan started down the stairs and turned back when he realized Cabe wasn’t following him. “I just need a minute.” His son nodded and left him alone with the ghost of his grandfather. He stared at the signature, written in the hand of a young man, sure and steady. He spoke to his beloved grandfather in the language he’d learned at his knee. “Nonno, you did it. You made a life in America. You made a family. You have a

grandson. He's a good man, Nonno. You'd be so proud of him. I know I am. And my wife, Kate. She's an Irish girl, but you'd love her too. She's strong and independent like Nonna. I have a happy life now, but it wasn't always so good. I hope my Amanda is with you. Keep her close until it's my time to join you. I still miss you Nonno. I hope I made you proud." He kissed his fingertips and placed them on the signature. "Goodbye." He walked down the stairs and joined his son and Father Bianci back inside the church.

"Good news, Dad. Father found the records, birth registries, marriages."

"That's wonderful."

"Come into my office and you can see." Cabe and Jonathan followed the priest toward his office when the bell in the steeple rang. Cabe looked at his watch and it was only eleven twenty.

"Doesn't your bell ring on the hour."

"Yes and the half hour, but sometimes it has a mind of its own. Personally I think it's the draft through the louvered shutters."

Cabe smiled. It wasn't windy today.

Cabe and Jonathan sat at the open air café having espressos. “Dad, are you okay? You seem quiet.”

“I’m fine, son. It’s just a lot to take in. These were the streets my grandparents walked. This is the church is where they were baptized and married.”

“What were they like?”

“They were good people, a bit old fashioned but loving. Growing up in their home was wonderful.” He rubbed his hand over his son’s shoulder. “I’m sorry you didn’t get to know them.”

“Me too.”

“Excuse me, are you the Gallos?” a man asked in Italian.

Cabe looked up and saw another version of himself and Jonathan. He stood and extended his hand. “Hello. I’m Cabe Gallo and this is my son, Jonathan.” Jonathan stood and shook his hand.

“Sofia said we looked alike but I am amazed.”

“So am I,” said Cabe. “I speak Italian but my son does not.”

“No problem,” said Carlo in English. “It is very nice to meet my American cousins.”

Cabe pointed to the table. “Please join us.” Carlo took a seat and wave to the waitress. She was a pretty blonde with bright green eyes. She came to the table and then looked back and forth at all three of them and smiled, especially Jonathan.

“Carlo, how do I not know these relatives of yours?”

“Because we just found each other. They are Americans come to find their family roots,” he said in English.

“Oh, Americans,” she smiled. She extended her hand to Jonathan. “Hello, I am Francesca,” she said in English.

“Hello Francesca. I’m Jonathan Gallo and this is my father Cabe.”

“So many good looking men at my table. What did I do to deserve this?” she grinned.

“How about you get me my espresso so I can talk to my family?” said Carlo in Italian. She rolled her eyes and turned, adding an extra swing to her hips. “Don’t mind her.”

“I’m sure she’s just fishing for a bigger tip,” said Jonathan.

“No, she was definitely hitting on you.”

“Maybe she was trying to make you jealous,” said Cabe.

Carlo laughed, “She knows better. My girlfriend Gaia would have something to say about that. But I’m here for family. When Sofia called I looked at the family bible. I wrote down some information. Your grandmother Sarafina was the sister of my great grandfather, Matteo. I wrote some details.” He handed Cabe a list of names dating back hundreds of years.

“Carlo, this is amazing. Thank you so much,” said Cabe. He handed it to Jonathan. He ran his fingers reverently over the names and then he wiped his eyes.

“Thank you, Carlo. You’ll never know how much this means to me.” Cabe rubbed his hand over Jonathan’s back.

“Is everything okay?” asked Carlo. Jonathan tried to answer but couldn’t.

“Jonathan and I didn’t find each other until a little over a year ago. I didn’t know he existed.”

Jonathan smiled and squeezed his father’s hand. “But we’ve been making up for lost time.”

“Bene, bene,” said Carlo. “I hope you’re ready for more family.”

“Excuse me?”

“When my mother found out why I was looking through the family bible she said you both had to come for dinner. I’m afraid there is no refusing my mother. The entire

family and most of the neighborhood, which is essentially the same thing, will be at our home at six pm. The address is on the back of the papers.”

Cabe smiled and Jonathan nodded. “I guess we’ll see you at six.”



Kate sat with Paige as they watched Ralph hold court with the brightest and the best of the computer industry. She thought she might feel a twinge about no longer being the center of attention, but she was happy to relinquish the spotlight to Ralph. “He’s really handling himself well.”

“I know,” Paige said with a choked voice.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. I know this is what he’s supposed to be doing. I’m so proud of him for this Initiative but...it was just yesterday he needed me.”

Kate covered Paige’s hand with hers. “He will always need you but just not as much as he used to, and that’s a good thing. That means you did your job.”

Paige smiled and looked at Kate. “I can’t help but notice you like keeping Jonathan pretty close.”

Kate sat back and smiled. “That’s different. You’ve had Ralph for thirteen years. I’ve had Jonathan for a year. I get a pass.”

Paige laughed and looked over at Ralph. He glanced up at them and smiled, then returned to his conversation. “How are you doing?”

“Me? I’m fine.”

“I mean with Cabe and Jonathan in Italy.”

“I admit it’s a bit unnerving but Cabe calls and...tucks me into bed.”

“He...?” Paige asked and then blushed. “Oh.” She took a sip of her coffee. “You two are certainly...okay I’ve don’t have the words here.”

“How about unique?” Kate grinned.

Paige laughed. “Yeah, that’ll work.”

Kate looked at her watch and realized it would be dinner time in Genoa. “Speaking of which I think I’ll give him a call, see how they’re doing.” She walked out to the hall and hit Cabe’s contact button.

“Hey babe. How goes the conference?” said Cabe.

“Great. Ralph is the star I’d thought he’d be.”

“How was his Initiative being received?”

“Terrific. I think it’s going to become a reality.”

“That’s wonderful. I’ll have to call him later and let him know how proud I am.”

“Speaking of family, how goes the search.”

“Katie, you won’t believe it. I found my grandfather’s signature in the local church. The parishioners used their skills to help maintain the church. It’s nearly six hundred years old. He worked on the masonry in the church. They signed the walls inside the dome. I found his signature, Katie. I found Nonno.”

“Oh, sweetheart, that’s wonderful.” She was delighted at the sound of Cabe’s excitement.

“Jonathan took pictures. I’ll have him send them to you. But that’s not all. We found my family.”

“Your family?”

“Cousins. You won’t believe the pictures.”

Kate heard lots of noise in that background and someone calling for Cabe in Italian.  
“What’s going on?”

“The family put together a feast for us. I’ll send you pictures. I can’t wait to see you and tell you all about it. I better go. They’re waiting for me. I’ll call you before you go to bed.”

“Okay, boyo. Don’t forget.”

“I promise, Katie girl.”

“Give my love to Jonathan.”

“I will. Bye, love.”

Kate leaned against the wall and stared at Cabe's contact picture. They were having a great time, without her.

"Kate, are you okay?"

She glanced up and saw Paige and Ralph in the hallway. "Yes, of course. Is it break time?"

"Yes, the manager told me they're all set up for us."

"Well, we shouldn't keep them waiting."

Jonathan looked around the large gathering and couldn't believe they were his family. For the first thirty years of his life he'd been an Ellsworth. The grandson of a prominent politician and his old money wife. His mother was their only child and on her own path to a legal career. Then his mother did the unthinkable, she got pregnant in college and he was the result. And they never let him forget it. All his life he was the outsider, the unwanted guest. That was until he met his father. Cabe and Kate had rescued him from his kidnaping by one of his mother's prosecution targets. They took him into their home and for the first time in his life he felt part of a family. Now almost everyone in the packed house was a relative. He could see his jawline on one person, his cleft chin on another, even the shape of his eyes. Carlo walked up to him and put his arm around his shoulder.

"Cousin, come. You and your father need to meet Zia Angelica. She was Sarafina's baby sister. She wants to meet you both. She's ninety five but still sharp as a tack. Come."

Jonathan spotted his father engaged in an animated conversation with Carlo's mother, Anna. "Dad, Carlo wants us to meet Zia Angelica."

"Oh yes, you must," said Anna in English. "I shouldn't have kept you so long."

"Who's Zia Angelica?"

Jonathan leaned in close. "Dad, she's Sarafina's sister."

"What?" he gasped. He looked at Carlo.

"It's true, said Carlo. "She's sitting in the lounge."

Cabe followed Carlo to a silver haired woman who was sitting court with a collection of Russos and Asaros. "Zia Angelica," Carlo started.

She looked at Cabe and Jonathan and held up her hand. "Stop," she said in Italian. She glanced at the two people sitting on either side of her and waved them off. "Go, Go." She waved Cabe and Jonathan over to sit. "Carlo told me about you but," her hand shook

as reached for Cabe's cheek. "I would know you anywhere. You are Sarafina's grandson. You have her eyes."

"Zia, this is my son, Jonathan."

"What a handsome boy."

"I'm sorry, Zia Angelica, I don't speak Italian."

She looked aghast and turned to Cabe. "You failed to teach your son. Sarafina and Alfonso taught you, taught your mother, Sara," she continued in English.

"I didn't know about him until this past year. He is learning."

"As he should."

"But he is a good man, Zia. He helps military veterans. I am very proud of him."

Zia smiled. "I see that. What do you do?"

Cabe smiled and pulled out his badge. "I am a Special Agent for Homeland Security. So is my wife, Kate."

"Kate, is she Italian?"

"No, but when she met me she learned to speak it. She's better at it than I am. She's a brilliant person."

"Show me."

"Excuse me."

"All you young people have those fancy phones. Show me pictures."

Cabe smiled and pulled out his phone. He pulled up a few pictures from their wedding, and some of all of them together.

She pulled the phone from his hand and pointed to a picture of him from his show at the Pennington Gallery. "Did you do this?"

"Yes, Zia."

Her eyes welled. “Our father painted. He was so gifted but he had to earn a living.”

“Jonathan is an artist too.” He pulled up a few of Jonathan’s sketches.

“Oh my.” She looked at Jonathan and said in heavily accented English, “You and your father, you have my father’s gift. You need to learn our language. Only then, will you truly realize your gift.”

“Yes, Zia. I will. I promise.”

Zia looked at Cabe. “You see to it. It’s your duty.”

“Yes Zia, I promise.” He smiled at his son. “Jonathan and I were both Marines. We are known for keeping our word.”

Zia reached beside her and pulled out a small wooden box. She ran her hands over it as her eyes welled. “You know I hated Alfonso for taking Sarafina so far away. She was my big sister, she looked after me. When she got to America she wrote to me. She told me all about her life in America. She also told me how happy she was with Alfonso.”

“Then did you stop hating him?” Cabe asked with a smile.

She gave him a sly smile. “Eventually.”

“They were very happy together, Zia. Nonno adored Nonna. That’s how I knew when I met Kate she was the one meant for me.”

“How long have you been married to the Irish girl?”

Cabe smiled “Three years.”

“Why did you wait for so long?”

“I was married before.” He took a breath and pulled up a picture. “We had a daughter, Amanda.” He showed Zia the picture. “She died when she was six from cancer. It destroyed our marriage.” Cabe thought Zia might judge him. Old school Catholics did not divorce. Instead, she put her hand to his cheek and pulled him close.

“My poor boy,” she whispered. She sat back and straightened her spine. “But all is well now, yes?”

“Yes, Zia. I have a very happy life. I have a wonderful family and a job that is important to me.”

“This is good.” She handed the box to Cabe. “These are letters Sarafina sent me. I want you to have them.”

“Oh, Zia, these are precious to you. I can’t”

She smiled. “Yes, they are very precious to me. That’s why you should have them. I am an old woman and God will call me home soon enough. My children already know the story. You and your son should have them, so you will know.”

Cabe wiped a tear from his cheek. “Zia, I will treasure them.” He looked at Jonathan. “We both will.”

“There are more letters, but these are the special ones. When she first arrived. When she had your mother, when you were born.”

Cabe pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his eyes. “Oh, Zia. I don’t know how to thank you. I’d hoped when we came here we’d find some evidence of Nonno and Nonna, but I never imagined that I would find all of you.” He glanced over at Jonathan and saw him wiping his cheek. He smiled and handed him his handkerchief.

Kate was just getting under the covers when her phone rang. “Hey there, Katie girl.”

“Cabe, it must be so early there.”

“It’s five am here. I set my alarm. I called Ralph first so I could hear about his day. I wanted to have more time with you.”

“The day went very well.”

“Ralph said he got several job offers.”

Kate chuckled. “Paige says he’s not allowed to work full time until he’s at least eighteen. She wants him to be a kid first.”

“A kid who can hack a Japanese surface to air missile,” Cabe said.

“So, he’s not your average kid. But she’s determined not let him get lost in the work.”

“She doesn’t want him to be another Walter.”

“I think that has a lot to do with it.” She pulled the covers tight around her and tried to imagine Cabe next to her in bed. “Tell me about your day. It sounds pretty exciting.”

“It was. Katie, I met my grandmother’s sister.”

“What? How old is she?”

“She’s ninety five and a real pistol. Katie, she gave me letters that my grandmother wrote to her. There are forty years worth of letters. She had her son Roberto deliver them our to our hotel. I read the letter where Nonna tells Zia Angelica about my birth.”

Kate heard the emotion in his voice. “Sweetheart, are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m good. It’s just so much more than I expected. I wish you could meet them. I’ve met my grandfather’s great, great nieces and nephews. At least that’s what I think they are. I’d have to look at the charts they gave me. Everyone has been so welcoming.”



“They’ve just accepted you?”

“Remember what Toby always says, ‘I love DNA’, well take a look at this picture of Carlo Russo. He is Zia Angelica’s great grandson.”

Kate heard the beep and pulled up the picture of Carlo, Jonathan and Cabe. “Oh my God!”

“See what I mean?”

“Carlo looks like he could be Jonathan’s brother.”

“And they get on like brothers.”

“That’s wonderful, Cabe.”

“Now I know how Jonathan feels.”

“What do you mean.”

“All those years with no family, after my parents and grandparents were gone. I had friends, Marine brothers and sisters, but there isn’t anything like looking into the face of someone who looks like you.”

“I’m really happy for you, sweetheart,” she said quietly.

“Oh Katie, I’m sorry. I forget sometimes.”

“Sweetheart, My parents were both only children. That’s my normal.”

“The Russo’s and Asaro’s, they’re your family too, you know.” Cabe chuckled. “Although Zia calls you the Irish girl.”

“Oh does she now?” Kate laughed. “Well, I can’t be mad at anyone who refers to me as a girl.”

“You’re my girl, Katie.”

“Always, boyo. Always.”

Cabe hung up the phone and walked into the kitchen unit. He shouldn't have been surprised that Jonathan was already up, making coffee. They were both used to being early risers from their days in the Marines.

"Did you talk to Mom?"

"Yeah, I think I put my foot in it. I was talking about how great it is to have such a big family now and I forgot."

"Mom doesn't have any family besides us and Scorpion, and no blood family."

"Yeah. Now I feel like crap."

"Don't worry, Dad. I'm sure she understands."

"I'm sure she does. I'm still going to send her some roses."

Jonathan poured his father some coffee. "It will be okay, Dad. You know it will."

"Yeah, I know."

"I'm going to grab a shower." Jonathan went into his side of the suite and closed the door. Before he took that shower, he had a call to make.

Jonathan and Cabe toured Carignano for the next few days with the aide of an endless supply of cousins, both Russo and Asaro. They walked the same places their grandparents walked, visited the same parks. One day when they were on their own they went back to the church with their sketch pads. They spent a companionable silence sketching for nearly an hour.

Jonathan peaked over Cabe's shoulder. "Very nice, Dad."

"Let's see what you've got." He looked at Jonathan's sketch and smiled. "Very good."

"Zia Angelica will probably say it won't be my best until I speak Italian."

"Probably," Cabe smiled.

"You're really going to make me learn, aren't you?"

"I'm not, Zia is. I have the feeling she won't be leaving the world until you do."

Jonathan flipped a page in his sketch pad. "Do you think this will buy me some of her good graces?" He showed Cabe a sketch he'd done of Zia, sitting in her favorite lounge chair, holding court with the family.

"I think this will make you serious points."

"I want to get a frame before dinner tonight."

"There's a shop the next street over. We can go after lunch."

Dinner was loud and animated. Everyone was so excited to meet their American cousins. They'd searched their own attics and found pictures of Sarafina and Alfonso as children and then as young loves. Jonathan had collected names, addresses and emails from all the relatives. He wanted to make sure they kept in touch. He decided it was time to give Zia Angelina her gift and asked Anna to retrieve it from the closet. Anna brought out the package and Jonathan stood. "Excuse me, everyone," he said as he tapped on his glass. He waited for the din to subside. "My father and I want to thank all of you for welcoming us to the family. I can't tell you how much it means to both of us." Jonathan

opened the package and pulled out two framed pictures. “Zia Angelica, I did this for you.” He handed the framed sketch to Zia. She looked at the picture as Jonathan held it in her lap. Her hands shook and she took a handkerchief from her pocket to wipe her eyes.

“Oh my,” she whispered. “Come here,” she waved him down with her hand and kissed his cheek. “Thank you, Nipote. It’s wonderful.”

“You’re very welcome, Zia.” He handed the other picture to Cabe.

“Anna, I want to thank you for welcoming my son and I into the family and hosting so many dinners for us.”

Anna waved her hand dismissively and laughed. “What host? This is just a normal dinner with two more family.”

“I want you to know how much Jonathan and I appreciate your hospitality.” Cabe handed her the picture and she gasped. Cabe had framed his sketch of the church and the square.

“Oh, Cabe. This is wonderful.” She handed the picture to Carlo as she walked around the table to him and gave him a tight hug. “Thank you, cousin. Now that we know you, don’t stay away for long.”

“I would love to come back, Anna.”

Anna pulled herself together and turned to the gathering. “Young ones, get to the dishes. The rest, move into the living room for after dinner drinks.

Cabe loved the hubbub of his raucous Italian family. They were loud and laughing and good people. The Russos and Asaros had been friends for generations. The group also included many neighborhood friends. Everyone was family. There were several women from the neighborhood who’d made a point to get to know Jonathan. He’d been polite but, with the aide of Carlo, managed to fend them off. Cabe, however, was not so fortunate. There were a few women who tried to pursue Cabe, despite his wedding ring. One woman, Gina, was particularly persistent. He was standing next to Zia Angelica’s

chair when Gina approached. “Cabe it’s been so wonderful having you here in our little town. It’s a shame you can’t stay longer. I could show you around.”

“I appreciate that but I need to get home to my wife.”

“Zia told me,” she said as she moved closer. “An Irish woman. A man like you needs an Italian woman.” Cabe flamed bright red at the woman’s boldness and then he heard a familiar voice.

“I may be Irish,” Kate said in perfect Italian. “but I understood every word you just said.” She reached into her pocket and flashed her badge. “And I am perfectly capable of kicking your ass.” Gina did a full body blush and quickly excused herself.

“Kate!” Cabe pulled her close and kissed her. “How, when?”

“How? Our son sent for me. When? Apparently just in time.” They both turned at the sound of laughter. It was Zia.

“Zia Angelica, this is my wife, Kate.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Zia. Cabe and Jonathan have told me so much about you I feel like I know you,” Kate said, again in perfect Italian.

Zia smiled and pulled her close to kiss her cheek. She looked at Cabe. “You were telling the truth. Her Italian is better than yours. She’s a tough one. I like her!”

“Thank you, Zia. I like her too.”

“Tell me, would you really have kicked her ass?”

“I protect what’s mine.”

“Hah! Are you sure you’re not Italian?”

“No, Ma’am. One hundred percent Irish.”

Zia patted her cheek. “I like you anyway. You must teach your son to speak our language as well as you do.”

“Yes, Zia. He told me of his promise to you. I’ll see to it.”

“I know you will,” she sat back and smiled. “You’ve done well for yourself, Cabe. Sarafina would approve.”

“Thank you, Zia,” they both replied.

“Mom!” Jonathan moved through the crowd towards her. He pulled Kate into a hug. “Mom, it’s good to see you.”

“It’s good to see you too.”

“How was your flight?”

“Wonderful.” She glanced at Cabe. “You’re right about those beds.”

“Son, you sent for her?”

“Dad, I know how much you missed her.” He looked at Kate. “He thinks I don’t know but he was sitting on the balcony late at night. He doesn’t sleep well without you.”

“Really?” she asked as she slipped her arms around his waist.

“Well…” He leaned in and whispered in her ear. “I miss my Irish Witch.”

She gave him a quick kiss and whispered in her brogue, “I’m here now, boyo.”

“Guys!” Jonathan whined. “You don’t really whisper.”

They smiled.

Cabe and Kate spent another hour meeting and greeting the gathered relatives before they were able to say good night and make it back to the hotel. Jonathan was going to a club with Carlo and Gaia and would be late. They both knew he was doing it to give them time alone.

They sat in the back of the car while Marco drove them back to the hotel. “Don’t worry Mrs. I made sure they put your luggage in your husband’s room.”

“Thank you, Marco,” said Kate.

“Your son was very specific. You have my card now. Anywhere you want to go, I will take you.”

“Right now, all I want is to go back to the hotel.”

They walked up to the hotel and got in the elevator. “It really is a beautiful hotel,” said Kate.

“Wait to you see the view of the room.” Cabe opened the door and delighted in her gasp.

“You weren’t kidding.”

“The kid must be spending a fortune on this.”

She turned to Cabe and smiled. “First of all, our son is no kid. The Ellsworths left him very well off and frankly the idea that he’s spending their money to treat us I find very amusing.”

Cabe laughed. “Huh. I hadn’t thought of it like that.” He stood behind her and slipped his arms around her waist as they looked at the view. “Okay, for real, how are you doing?”

“Honestly, it wasn’t easy being away from you,” she giggled a bit. “Those late night phone calls sure helped.”

“It wasn’t a bad way for me to start my day.” He turned her to face him. “Now we’re here, together and our son won’t be back for hours.” He led her into his bedroom. He ran his finger down the neckline of her bright green blouse. “Don’t think I didn’t notice you went full on Irish with this look. The green blouse, the Celtic earrings and necklace,” he ran his hands through her long hair. “and your hair is loose. Making a point?”

“Like I told Zia,” she ran her hands up his chest. “I protect what’s mine.”

“What’s the color of the day, Witch?” he asked. Kate had always liked fancy lingerie but once she met Cabe, she turned it into an art form.

“Do you expect me to do all the work for ‘ya?” she grinned.

He unbuttoned her blouse as quickly as he could without popping buttons. He pulled it off her arms and grinned. "Hell yeah." She slipped off her slacks and jewelry until all that remained was the bustier she'd had made. Based on a passionate weekend they'd spent, it was an representation of when Cabe had used body paint to turn Kate into his vision of the Irish Witch.

"Well boyo, I take it you like what you see. What do you plan to do about it?" she said in the brogue that drove him nuts. He scooped her up and tossed her on the bed. He pulled off his jeans and shirt as quickly as he could. He climbed into bed and pulled her into a passionate kiss.

"Oh God, I missed you," he whispered. He looked into her eyes and they'd gone to the deep emerald that matched her passion.

"Show me," she whispered.

He did.



Cabe pulled Kate close and kissed the top of her head. "It's so good to have you here."

"Mmmm. Our son is a good man. He knew we both needed each other."

"He was right. I wasn't sleeping well," said Cabe.

"You were worried about me."

"I couldn't help it. I know if you'd had a problem you'd call me or Toby but I still worried."

Kate propped herself up on her elbow. "You know I'm continuing to do the work to handle my PTSD. I check in with Toby regularly. He says I'm doing well."

"I know, baby. I just can't help but worrying about you."

"I'm very glad I don't have to handle this alone," she gave him a soft kiss. They heard the door to their room open then close and footsteps as Jonathan walked around the kitchenette. "Do you want to see how Jonathan enjoyed his night?"

"No," Cabe snickered. "Let him think his old folks are asleep."

Kate giggled as she ran her hand down Cabe's waist. "Well, somebody's awake." She tried to hold in her gasp as Cabe flipped her on her back.

Jonathan put on the coffee and tried not to wonder why his parents were sleeping late. His night with Carlo and Gaia was great fun but clubs weren't really his thing. What he really wanted to do with the few days they had left was see some museums and tour the city. Maybe some of that he could do with his parents. He was sure they'd want to spend some time on their own. He sat out on the balcony and watched the boats go out of the cove to the ocean. He was so glad he'd done this. His parents had given him everything. He wanted to give them a trip they'd never forget. Maybe a lunch on the water. He'd seen when he made the reservations that they offered catered boat trips.

"Good morning, baby." Kate leaned over and kissed Jonathan on the cheek.

"Morning, Mom. Is Dad, still sleeping?"

"Nope, just pouring coffee." He handed Kate a cup of tea and he sat down with his coffee.

"How was your evening?" asked Kate.

"It was fun. Carlo and Gaia introduced me to her sister, Mia. We had a good time."

"Oh really? What was she like?"

"Katie, give the boy a break."

"She was very nice Mom. We had some drinks and danced. That's it. No wedding plans."

Kate gave him a look of surrender. "Fine. But you can't blame me for wanting grandchildren."

Jonathan leaned over and gave her a kiss. "I don't. I want that to. But I think it will be like with you and Dad. Once I meet her, I'll know."

"Just don't wait until I'm Zia's age."

"Okay in a blatant attempt to change the subject, I saw that the hotel offers a boat tour of the coast. You travel up the coast and they cater a lunch."

"A catered lunch on a boat? How big is the boat?" asked Cabe.

“I’m not sure. Big enough for a captain to sail it and someone to serve the meal.”

“Sounds like fun,” said Kate. “Cabe, call the desk and see if you can book it.”

“Actually,” said Jonathan. “I was thinking you two should go. I thought you’d like to spend some time together.” Cabe gave him the look that said he knew Jonathan wasn’t telling him everything. “Okay, the truth is, as much as I’ve loved being with the family, it has been a little overwhelming. I’d like to wander around with my sketch pad. Maybe hit up a museum. It’s what I used to do when I was stationed overseas. My squad would look for the nearest bar while I wanted to look at the architecture.”

Cabe smiled. “Sure son, sounds good. I wouldn’t mind an afternoon with my girl.” He grabbed Kate’s hand and gave it a kiss.

“But don’t forget we’re hosting the family for dinner in the hotel restaurant,” said Kate.

“I won’t. There is one thing I wanted to mention. Carlo and Gaia are getting married next month. It’s too soon to come back. I have cases pending and Homeland needs you two to keep the world safe from the bad guys. I thought we could give them a gift before we leave.”

“That’s a great idea. Carlo’s a school teacher so I imagine he doesn’t do that well. What does Gaia do?” asked Cabe.

“She’s a waitress.”

“She probably doesn’t make much. How about we give them a check?” asked Kate.

“I was thinking the same thing. The concierge can convert dollars to euros for us,” said Jonathan.

“Okay, then we should call the concierge for reservations and someone needs to order breakfast.” Kate leaned toward Cabe and whispered, “Mama’s hungry.”

Cabe smiled. Jonathan rolled his eyes.



Jonathan had his sketch pad and pencils in a portfolio as he wandered the streets. Everything was set for tonight. The big room was reserved and the staff was alerted to be prepared for at least thirty Russos, Asaros and assorted guests. He gave credit to the concierge for barely blinking when he wanted a check for twenty thousand euros made out to Mr. and Mrs. Carlo Russo. That should give his cousin and his new wife a good leg up as they start married life.

He walked the streets and enjoyed the sights. This noise was different from the sound of a family dinner. He was separate from this noise. He was an observer, not a participant. He looked in shop windows and stopped at an artist's supply store. They specialized in recreating the paints of the Renaissance with the same materials they used five hundred years before. He made the clerk's day when he bought two complete sets, one for his father and one for him. He took a card when the clerk assured him they could ship internationally. A little further down the street and found a jewelry store. He couldn't come back without a gift for his mother. He walked around the store but stopped dead when he saw it. He'd never seen anything like it. It was a magnificent pendent, simple in design. Anything more would have taken away from the stone.

"Excuse sir, sir. Do you speak English?"

"Yes, sir. How can I help you?"

"What is this stone. I've never seen one before."

"Oh that is very rare. It's a black opal."

"It's magnificent, the colors. My mother would love it."

"Oh you would be a blessed son if you got that for your mama." The clerk pulled it out of the case and let him see it. The daylight made the colors even brighter.

"I have to have it for her."

"Ah, sir. It's twenty six thousand euros."

Jonathan did a quick conversion in his head. That would be about thirty thousand U.S. dollars. He pulled out his black American Express card. "I'll take it. Please wrap it for me."

One more clerk's day was made.

Kate watched as Cabe sketched the colorful buildings on the coastline. “That’s beautiful, sweetheart.”

“Thanks,” he muttered as he moved his pencil as if possessed. When he finally glanced up. “I’m sorry, Katie. I’ve been ignoring you.”

“It’s fine. I love watching you work.”

“It really is stunning here.”

“I can’t wait to see the finished piece.”

Cabe closed the sketch pad and set it aside. “I have more than enough to finish it when we get home.” He pulled her into his lap and place a kiss on her neck. “I’m glad you’re here.”

“Mmmmm. So am I. It was so sweet of Jonathan to send for me.”

“He is a good kid, despite growing up with Kathleen.”

Kate felt herself tense. “That bitch. I hope she’s having a fun in federal prison.”

He pulled her tight against him. “I shouldn’t have mentioned her. I know how she sets you off.”

“After what she did to you and Jonathan? Damn right she sets me off.”

“Okay, deep breath. Enjoy the sea air.”

“Sorry.”

“It’s fine. I understand.”

“Excuse me sir, madam,” said the steward. I have your luncheon prepared.” They followed the steward to the stern of the boat where there a lunch had been set out and a bottle of champagne was chilling in a silver bucket. “Shall I serve the champagne?”

“Yes, please,” said Cabe. The steward served the champagne, removed the silver covers from the meals and disappeared below deck. Cabe raised his glass and Kate raised hers. “To our wonderful son and his beautiful mother.”

Kate smiled, knowing what he was doing. “And to his wonderful father, who knows how to shift a conversation.”

“I love you, sweetheart.”

“I love you, too.” They sipped their champagne surrounded by the beauty of the Ligurian sea.



Jonathan was sitting at the café sipping his espresso in between sketching his surroundings. Then she sat down at the table next to him. He couldn't take his eyes off her. The light struck her dark blonde hair at just the right angle. She ordered an espresso and pulled out a book and began reading. He pulled out his sketch pad and started capturing her. He knew he had to get her image down before she left. He was putting some touches to her hair when she said something without looking up, in Italian.

"I'm sorry. If you were speaking to me, I don't speak enough Italian to understand."

"Ah, American," she said.

"Yes. I'm visiting with my parents. So, were you speaking to me?"

"I was asking you why you were sketching me."

He looked at her like he couldn't believe the question. "Because you're so beautiful."

The woman laughed. "Does that line work in America?"

"It's not a line and you are beautiful." He stood and brought his sketch pad to her table. "You're very beautiful."

She gasped. "You're a gifted artist."

"Thank you. May I join you?" She indicated to the empty chair and he grabbed his things and sat down. He extended his hand. "I'm Jonathan Gallo."

"Emma Moretti."

"It is a pleasure to meet you Emma."

"If you are here with your parents, where are they?"

"They're on a tour of the coast."

"So you are wandering alone?"

"I enjoy observing people. I like to sketch."

"May I see some more of your work?"

“Of course.”

She flipped through some of the sketches he'd done since he'd arrived. One was of one of the family gatherings. “What is this, a restaurant?”

“No. We came to Italy to trace my father's grandparents. We wound up finding dozens of relatives.”

“Who is your family?”

“The Russos and Asaros.”

“I went to school with Gaia Fazio. She's engaged....”

“To my cousin Carlo.”

“Yes.”

Jonathan pulled out a picture of himself with Carlo and his father. “Gaia wasn't with us that night.”

“That's your father?”

“Yes.”

“Wow. You all look so much alike.”

Jonathan smiled. “We get that a lot,”

“So you're an artist in America?”

“Actually, I'm a lawyer.”

“Really?”

“Really. What do you do, Emma?”

“I design jewelry.”

“That's interesting.”

“You would say anything was interesting to continue talking to me.”

“No, I wouldn’t do that. A friend of our family’s is a jewelry designer. Michaela Turner. She does beautiful work.”

Emma gave her a side glance. “You know Michaela Turner...THE Michaela Turner.” Jonathan smiled, suddenly grateful for photo cloud storage. He pulled up a picture of Marina Nash’s last birthday party. It was a picture of him with Michaela, her husband Jake Sokolov and his namesake, Jacob Nash. Emma looked at the picture, looked at him and then back at the picture. “Okay. You know Michaela Turner.”

“Emma, are you busy tonight?”

“Are you asking me on a date?”

“Technically it’s a family dinner. Carlo and Gaia will be there, along with most of the family. My parents wanted to host a thank you dinner for the family. They’ve been very kind.”

Emma stared at him for a moment. “Where is it?”

“The Marina Palace Resort. Dinner’s at seven. Please say you’ll come.”

Emma smiled. “I guess you’ll have to wait and see.”

Jonathan got back to the hotel just as his parents were finished dressing for dinner. Dad was wearing a blue suit and Mom was wearing a simple black sheath. He smiled knowing his gift would look perfect with her dress.

“Where have you...” Kate started.

“I know, I know. I’m late but you’ll forgive me when you see the reason.” He opened his portfolio and showed them the picture of Emma.

“She’s beautiful,” said Cabe.

“Her name is Emma Moretti and I’ve invited her join us for dinner. She’s friends with Gaia, Carlo’s fiancée.”

“That’s wonderful, son.” Kate smiled.

“Don’t start planning the wedding yet, Mom.”

“Fine. I’ll behave. Now go get ready. They’ll be here in an hour.”

“First things first.” Jonathan opened the shopping bag and handed Cabe the case of paints.

“Son. This is fantastic. Thank you.” Cabe stood and gave him a hug.

“You’re welcome, Dad.” He pulled the long flat case out of the bag. “I didn’t forget you, Mom” He was pleased with her gasp and welling eyes.

“Oh, sweetheart, this is beautiful. Cabe look.”

“Wow, excellent taste, son. What is it?”

“A black opal. I liked all the colors.”

“I love it.” She pulled it out of the case. “Help me put it on.” She looked at herself in the mirror and gave her son a hug. “I love you, baby.”

“I love you too, Mom.”

Kate smiled. “Now get your ass in the shower and get dressed. We have forty five minutes before we have a restaurant full of family.”

The gathering was as boisterous as any they'd had in a Russo or Asaro home. They were having cocktails in a side room while the staff but the finishing touches on the main dining room. Everyone was smiling and laughing except Jonathan. He was looking at the entrance, hoping to catch a glimpse of Emma. She hadn't promised to come, but he hoped.

"Son, calm down." He felt his father's hand on his back. "She'll be here."

"I hope so."

Cabe chuckled. "Uh oh."

"What uh oh?"

"You've never been this nervous about a date."

"I'm not. I ...oh crap, you're right."

"Come on. Let's take five minutes and give Carlo and Gaia their gift. It will take your mind off your nerves." Carlo and Gaia were talking to Sofia who had started this reunion in motion. For once, Sofia was a guest, not the staff. "Carlo, Gaia, could we see you for a minute? Sofia could you excuse us?"

"Of course," she said with a smile. She was in on the surprise and had shown them an empty conference room they could use.

Cabe waved Kate over from talking with Carlo's mother, Anna and she joined them. "You ready?" she asked.

"Ready for what?" asked Carlo.

Cabe led them to the empty room. "Before anything gets to hectic with all the guests we wanted to thank you for inviting us to your wedding. You know we'd love to be there but we do have to get back to our work."

"We understand," said Gaia.

"Carlo, we can't thank you enough for welcoming us to the family. You gave us something we've never had, a big loving family."

Carlo smiled. "You are family, one of us."

"Thank you." Cabe reached into his pocket and handed Carlo an envelope. "This is a wedding gift from all of us." Carlo looked in the envelope and gasped, followed by several colorful Italian phrases. He showed the envelope to Gaia who started to cry.

"This is so much. How is this possible? Do lawyers do that well in America?" Gaia asked.

Cabe smiled. "Kate's father founded a computer company, Rimark."

"My biological grandmother left me comfortable."

"This is so generous," said Carlo. "I don't know what to say?"

"You don't have to say anything. You just have to promise one thing. If Zia Angelica ever needs anything you'll let us know."

"Of course," Carlo smiled as he hugged Cabe. He turned to Jonathan. "Cousin, thank you."

"You're very welcome, cousin. My parents and I hope this will give you a good start on your married life."

Gaia hugged Cabe, then Jonathan and finally Kate. "Gaia, Jonathan is expecting your friend, Emma Moretti, to join us."

"You know Emma?"

"We met at a café and I asked her to join us. I better get out there in case she comes." Jonathan excused himself as Kate put her arm through Gaia's.

"Emma, she's a nice girl?" asked Kate.

"Oh yes, very nice."

"What does she do?"

"Kate!" called Cabe.

"What? "Can't a mother be curious?"

“You have nothing to worry about,” said Gaia. “I’ve known Emma since we were children. She’s a lovely girl.”

Cabe smiled and shook his head. At least he tried.

Jonathan walked back to the party just in time to see Emma come through the main entrance. Her long blonde hair was loose on her shoulders. She was wearing a simple dark blue cocktail dress that showed off some particularly lovely legs. He walked toward her and smiled. "Emma, I'm so glad you're here." He leaned in and kissed her cheek, hoping he could pass it off as Italian friendliness and not boldness.

"You did say Gaia and Carlo would be here so I assume I will be safe."

He took her hands in his. "You'll always be safe with me." He noticed a little hitch in her breath but decided not to press. "Come, Carlo and Gaia are just inside" He stopped and looked at Emma. "I must warn you, you'll meet my parents. My father is a lot like me but my mother may...she may ask you questions."

"You're mother's Italian?"

"No, Irish. But she is very interested in who I date."

"So she's a normal mother."

Jonathan laughed. "Not even close."

"So, is that what we are doing? Dating?"

"Well, let's have dinner and figure the rest out later."

They sat next to Gaia and Carlo at dinner and Jonathan had to give his dad credit for steering his mother's conversation in appropriate directions. Unfortunately Emma gave her the perfect opening. "Jonathan told me he's a lawyer. What do you do?"

"My husband and I are Homeland Security agents."

"Pardon?"

Kate repeated herself in Italian and pulled out her badge. "No one believes me unless they see the badge. They always believe Cabe." Emma looked startled. "I mostly work with computers."

"Don't let her fool you, Emma," said Cabe. "She's pretty handy in a street fight."



Emma looked at Jonathan and he could see her panic. He reached for her hand under the table. "Don't worry. She's a great agent." He couldn't help but look at his parents with pride. "They both are. That's how they found out about me, when I was kidnapped. They rescued me."

"What?" replied everyone at the table who wasn't a Gallo.

"My father didn't know about me until just over a year ago. My biological mother was a prosecuting attorney and the crime boss she was after kidnapped me. Mom and Dad found me and rescued me."

"My God," said Carlo.

Emma gave his hand a squeeze. "I'm so glad you're okay." Then she smiled. "That explains why you don't speak Italian. Your parents Italian is excellent."

"I know. I've promised Zia Angelica I will learn."

Emma shrugged and picked up her wine. "Then you must. No one denies Zia Angelica anything."

"So, what do you do, Emma?" asked Kate. Jonathan cringed. He knew it was coming. "I'm a jewelry designer."

"That's wonderful. Did you design your necklace?"

Jonathan had barely noticed the fine threads of gold that twisted into a small collar necklace.

"Yes I did."

"It's beautiful," Kate smiled and touched her necklace. "Jonathan picked this up for me today."

"It's stunning," said Emma. "May I?" She stood from her chair and Kate stood so she could have a better look. "Oh my God," she whispered.

"What is it?" asked Jonathan. "It's not a fake, is it?"

Emma's eyes were wide. "No, it's very real and very rare. I've never seen one this size." She composed herself and smiled. "Your son loves you to get you something so special."

"Mom is very special," he smiled. Then he pulled back. He needed to change the topic or Emma would think he's a Mama's boy.

"Carlo, have you and Gaia decided where you're going on your honeymoon?"

Carlo looked at Gaia and blushed. "We were thinking about a weekend in Ibiza."

"Why don't you come to California? You could stay at Jonathan's," said Cabe. "Jonathan, stays with us a lot anyway."

"I don't know..." said Gaia as she looked Carlo.

"We both live at the beach. Mom and Dad's house is about a half mile down the coast. You could have the place to yourself," he smiled. "Just think about it. There's no pressure and we won't be offended if you say no."

Jonathan sat back and finished his dinner, hoping he'd gotten the conversation back to a normal track.

They'd paid their respects to Zia Angelica before Carlo took her home. The party was starting to wind down as his parents said good night to the guests. Jonathan took Emma by the hand and led her out to the deck. He'd had a waiter set up a bucket of champagne at a table in a quiet corner. Jonathan poured the champagne for each of them and sat down. "What should we toast to?"

"How about to a lovely evening?" They touched glasses and each took a sip.

"I'll be here for three more days. I'd like to see you again."

"Jonathan, under normal circumstances I'd say yes."

"But these aren't normal circumstances," he said. "I'm planning on coming back. You know Zia wants to check how my Italian lessons are coming along."

“Jonathan, you are a wonderful man. I love your family. Your mother reminds me of my mother.”

“She’ll love to hear that.”

“This would be a very long distance relationship. It would be very difficult.”

Jonathan took her hand in his. “I understand and I promise not to pressure you but the one thing I’ve learned in the past year about being a Gallo is we never give up.”

Cabe got Kate comfortable in her seat and looked over at Jonathan. He was staring out the window and he hoped he didn't regret the trip. "Son, are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Dad."

"No, you're not," said Kate. "You miss Emma."

"You two being cops can really be a pain."

"It's not being a cop. It's being a parent," said Cabe. "Talk to us."

"You were right, Dad."

"Uh, oh," said Cabe.

"Uh, oh what?" asked Kate.

"Emma's the one," said Cabe.

"She is?" asked Kate.

"Yeah, I think she is. Hell, I know she is." Jonathan had convinced Emma to spend his last few days in Italy together. She showed him her part of town. He had dinner with her family. They held hands in museums. He sketched her in front of the town fountain. He will remember forever their first kiss. It was just last night. He took her home after dinner and he gave her a soft kiss. He pulled back and smiled, wanting so much more. It was then she ran her hands up his chest and pulled him into a deeply passionate kiss.

"I thought we were going to keep this simple. That was not simple."

She looked at him with a gleam in her eyes. "I'm complicated." She smiled and walked into her home and closed the door. She lived her parents and he didn't dare knock. Today they had a goodbye lunch with his parents. He waited outside the hotel to catch her before the meal. He took her by the hand and led her out to the marina.

"We've gotten complicated."

"I guess so," she smile. "Perhaps I shouldn't have done what I did. I just wanted to know what it would be like to really kiss you before you left."

“No, I’m glad you did. I’ve been wanting to do that ever since I first saw you in the café.”

“Jonathan, I live here and you live in California. It’s impossible.”

“I would have said a year ago that having an enormous family that I love was impossible. This year has taught me a lot of things, like miracles happen. I shouldn’t have survived my kidnapping, but I did. We shouldn’t have found each other, but we did. Now that we did, I’m not willing to give up.” He handed her an envelope. “In here is a round trip ticket to Los Angeles. It’s open ended. You can come when ever you want.”

“Jonathan...”

He pulled her into a deep kiss. “Take a chance, Emma. We’re worth it.”

They had their lunch with his parents and they said goodbye at the hotel. He didn’t want a big scene at the airport. Now they were in the air, on their way home. He’d started this so he and his father could find their family. He found so much more.

“Son, are you sure about this, about Emma? It’s going to be tough long distance.”

“I know, Dad.” He sat back and smiled. “I also know it’s going to be worth it.”