After getting report from Tiffany and Jackson, I found a computer and made a plan to hide in the family lounge for a few minutes. I needed to get myself together and fight the urge to run into Monica’s room and beg her to forgive me. Part of it was the need to lay eyes on her and know she was alive, part of it was to find out if she was my friend anymore and part of it was to get the inevitably pain over with when she rejected me.

That plan was thwarted in its tracks when two men turned the corner, onto the unit and into my line of sight. One was Jerry. The other, I could only assume, was the investigator. The badge on his shirt let me know but I wouldn’t have needed it. The clipboard in his hand was a dead giveaway that he was DOH. The man was easily 6’4” as he towered over Jerry. Salt and pepper hair was cut short to his head, more like a soldier than a government employee. He was close to 50 years old if not just over it. The white shirt was buttoned up to his throat, pressed within an inch of its life and tucked into grey slacks. If that didn’t tell me how uptight he was, the shiny wingtips would. They were polished and perfect. I knew instantly that this guy wasn’t going to leave any stone unturned or any detail uninvestigated.

I gulped and fixed a fake smile onto my lips before stepping forward to meet them. I had to look up to meet his eyes. Extending my hand, the inspector gripped tight and pumped once before dropping it. “Hi, I’m Kate a nurse on the unit.”

“Head nurse,” Jerry quipped and gave me a look that told me not to correct him.

“Henry Kunsman,” he responded. The voice was so deep it was on the edge of a rumble and the tone was definitely in line with the whole “military” vibe.

I really didn’t have time to fluff an inspector. I had enough on my plate so I tried to rush the exchange. “What can I do for you Mr. Kunsman?”

“Direct? I like it. And, it is Henry. I need to look at the charting on this unit for the past two weeks. I am specifically interested in night shift since the complaints were directed at the night nurses.”

“Complaints? Plural?”

“Yes,” he answered and clearly didn’t want to expand.

“Follow me.” I waved for him to follow and took him into the unit director’s office. Last time I had been in here, Monica had been talking to me and Sorin had shown up behind me. Fighting back the emotions that stirred up in me, I opened the door and turned on the computer. Accessing the charting system was quick work. Henry sat down at the desk, looking huge in the small office.

“I will find you if I need you,” he said without looking at me. Jerry nodded that it was okay for me to leave, so I did.

The next few hours were tense on the floor. Everyone knew that Henry Kunsman was digging through charts and didn’t look like he was going to go easy on us. No one knew what the complaint had been or if it had been our unit specifically, just that it was nights. And, since we were all on nights, we were all nervous.

I made a point to avoid looking into Monica’s room as I moved from 301 to 303. Though I did focus on her heartbeat and breathing a few times to be sure she was okay. I may have even peeked at her monitor at the nurses’ station to watch her heart rhythm for a minute or two.

Diana was taking care of her so it wasn’t even like I could casually ask her nurse how she was doing. It was evident that Diana hated my guts. I wondered if Monica had told her something that made her hate me. I knew in my heart that Monica never would have shared my big secret but maybe she’d said something else like “it’s her fault I’m here” or “I will never look at her the same” or “I don’t want her near me.” She may have even said something under the influence of pain killers without realizing it.

Whatever it was, Diana was not my fan. And frankly, I didn’t care. I had enough to worry about without trying to make a friend out of enemy. I just wish I could find out how Monica was doing.

When Henry came out of the office, I stopped worrying about my friend and started to worry again about the investigation. I reminded myself that as soon as he was done, I could go back to Sorin and spend 14 days with him. Henry’s face was a mix of frustration and concern. I didn’t like it.

“Miss Murphy?” He waved me over.

“Yes.”

“Are you familiar with the night staff?”

“Yes.”

“Good. I would like to interview you. Come into the office please.”

I followed him into the cramped room and tried to not react when he clicked on the overhead light. It felt too much like being interrogated and I had no idea what he was about to ask me. I found the chair on the other side of the office. Instead of sitting back behind the desk, he leaned back onto the desk, facing me with his arms crossed. It was reminiscent of a principal who was about the lecture his student about responsibility.

“You’ve been here a long time.”

“I have.”

“Tell me about some of the newer staff. How well do you know Dr. Kitchner?”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you feel he is competent? Do you see him outside of the hospital?”

“Yes, he is competent. We wouldn’t have him here if he wasn’t.” I didn’t know where he was headed with this line of questioning but I didn’t like it. Whatever complaint he had received, I hoped it wasn’t about Alex. “And, no. I don’t see him outside of the hospital. Plus, he has been here five years so I wouldn’t really call him new.”

“How about Jackson Hutton? He has been here less than a year. How well do you know him?”

“Not well, Mr. Kunsman. We work together. I don’t see them anywhere but here. I know them as well as you know anyone you work with. But, as far as competency goes. I trust everyone on this floor with my life.”

He turned, retrieved his clipboard from the desk and furiously wrote on the papers. Everything in me wanted to get up and walk out but I resisted. No need to make this worse than it had to be. When he looked up, I put the smile back on my face.

“How about breaks?” He asked. “How long of a break do you get when you work?”

I had been in DOH investigations before and this one was getting weirder by the second. “We are supposed to get two 15-minute breaks and one-half hour lunch. But it never happens.”

“And does anyone ever put that together and leave their assignment for the full hour?”

I laughed out loud before I could stop myself. “Never. Whether you want to believe me or not, we never get a full break and no one leaves that long. The last time-” I stopped myself. The last time was when I had gone outside to eat and died. Probably best to leave that out.

“Is that the complaint?” I asked. “Did someone say we abandon patients for an hour at a time? And what does that have to do with Alex?”

“Who?”

“Dr. Kitchner,” I corrected.

“Nurse Murphy. I don’t need to tell you the complaint at this time. When I have my findings, I assure you the issue at hand will be known. Until then, I expect you to answer the questions honestly.” He stood, opened the door and gestured me out. Which I happily complied. Between Diana and him, I had enough attitude for one night.

This is what I get for agreeing to come in.