

## Meet Cute

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Rating: P14 / T

Contents: Meet cute - the encounter of two potential romantic partners in unusual or comic circumstances.

Characters: Jane & Lisbon... mostly... again :D

Disclaimer: This masterpiece of a TV show, *The Mentalist*, unfortunately wasn't my idea. The lucky man who has every right to pat himself on the shoulder is Bruno Heller, as the show belongs to him, Paramount Television and CBS.

Author's Note: This series was inspired by the mention/description of a "meet cute" in the movie "The Holiday".

Another definition as the one in the summary, by the way, is: *scenario in which two individuals are brought together in some unlikely, zany, destined-to-fall-in-love-and-be-together-forever sort of way.*

This won't be an overly romantic one shot series, but hopefully it will be fluffy. I know the definition says otherwise, but we all agree that Teresa and Patrick are not yet ready for a relationship, don't we?

## Shopping

She hated shopping. Maybe people said that shopping was part of a woman's nature, but then she definitely was another woman from another planet. Or something like that. And she even more hated shopping when she had to buy a dress - like now.

Of course Teresa Lisbon loved it that her younger brother was getting married. Aside from the fact that she now was the one member of her family who still wasn't married off she was really happy. And since she tended to ignore this certain fact, she had no reason to be not happy. Well, if there wasn't be this whole buying-a-dress-thing.

She had so hoped that there was something suitable in her closet. Not suitable for her - she never looked good in dresses anyway - but for a wedding. A romantic wedding in a palace garden, with lots of beautiful flowers around; a rich green topped by small colorful dots, shining in the sun. And the glowing celestial body would be surrounded by a beautiful blue and some white fluffy clouds.

Maybe she should kill her brother.

Lisbon groaned. Her almost-sister-in-law had asked her to wear something flowing in a light blue - *was she a baby?* - or pink - *definitely no option* - or cream - *what a stupid color*. Or yellow - what was most likely going to be her choice. As far as she found something in this color.

She had already chased away the saleslady who had offered to help her. And her pride held her back from searching for mentioned woman to ask for some advice. Or guidance.

Or counseling.

She definitely should have chosen another, a smaller shop. The range of dresses in the one she was made her think that there were enough of one-piece woman clothing around to supply a whole college for graduation ceremony. She didn't even know where to start; she was wandering around helplessly between sundresses, evening gowns,

cocktail dresses, dresses for happy and dresses for sad occasions. This had to be a paradise for those women who loved to pretty themselves up.

But - just for the protocol - she wasn't one of those women.

A figure walking close by caught Lisbon's attention. Mostly because the figure looked a lot like someone... oh no. She closed her eyes for a second, then opened them again. It couldn't be... no, that was, that *had* to be a hallucination. Patrick Jane, CBI's as annoying as helpful, or sometimes simply annoyingly helpful, consultant, couldn't be here! What the hell was he doing here?! Without any further thought, she ducked behind one of the clothes racks and waited for a moment. She allowed herself to peek over the clothes rack a few seconds later and was relieved to find him out of sight. And hopefully gone.

"Lisbon! What a lucky coincidence!"

Hopes had always been destined with an early death in her life.

The voice startled her and she nearly shrieked when she flinched. How stupid to think that he was actually gone *and* hadn't noticed her. There he was, with a happy smile on his face, and something dark blue she identified as the usual three-piece suit thrown over his arm. Hundreds of shops around. Uncounted days and hours to shop. But of course he had to chose this particular day and time and shop to buy new clothes. That wasn't coincidence. That was cruel fate.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, sounding excited, and came closer to see if she, too, had already chosen something.

The small and yet powerful cynical voice in her head forced her to let out a very irritated: "Shopping." He only chuckled.

"Let me guess - Teresa Lisbon hates shopping." It wasn't a question - when did he ever really ask when he already knew everything? - and she couldn't make out what the reason for her anger was. Part of it definitely came from being forced to go shopping. The other part... well, the usual. Patrick Jane. Explained everything.

"Yea, well, I don't want to waste your precious time, I guess you have a lot to do. So how about you-"

"How about I help you finding that dress your sister-in-law suggested? Or required, I leave it to you how you'd like to call it," he interrupted her and without giving her any chance to answer, he grabbed her arm and pulled her with him.

An hour later, they were both laughing frantically. People were looking at them confused, some of them even a bit anxious. And who wouldn't have been by looking at the scene that was playing in and around the changing cubicles.

A woman was hopping in and out of one of the cubicles, every time with another dress. Most of them looked quite ugly or just crazy because of color, pattern or cut, while others made the brown-haired woman look like a fairytale princess since countless layers of cloth surrounded her.

Sitting outside the cubicles was a very handsome man with a contagious smile and cute dimples who was encouraging the woman to try on just another dress. Sometimes he would walk around looking for new dresses for his companion, give it to her and then again wait for her to don it.

They both looked like they had never had more fun in their lives.

Lisbon just couldn't stop laughing. Somehow Jane had talked her into trying on dresses, and he had started commenting on the way she looked in them - not in a bad or rude way, but in a funny and even sweet way. Some of those dresses he brought her were indeed ugly, but then it was also amusing to hear how creative he was in commenting on the designer's skills. She would giggle every time and spin around, or dance on her tiptoes with a serious face.

In the end, after an hour of trying on and nearly laughing themselves to death, he stood there in front of her cubicle when she came out, and held up a wonderful yellow dress. Even in the artificial light it seemed to glow and she immediately fell in love with it. It was perfect.

Turning in front of the mirror, she knew that she had found her dress. It's color was bright and shining and didn't make her look too pale; the cut accentuated her figure, but didn't make her look too small; the long, wide sleeves hid her less-loved arms, although the chiffon they were made of was see-through; the skirt was long and flowing and soft against her skin. It looked like the dress of a fairy, yet not kitschy or too fairytale-like.

"That's it?" Patrick asked silently, watching her from his seat a few steps away from the mirror and noticing her pleased look and the little smile on her lips.

"That's it," Teresa answered.

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Before they could leave the shop, Lisbon now happily holding the bag with her new dress even she liked in her hand, Jane turned around and effectively stopped her by standing in her way. She frowned a bit when he came close to her and at first she thought he was going to kiss her, but then his mouth only brushed her cheek and stopped next to her ear to say: "If it wasn't your brother getting married, I would be really afraid of the groom eloping with you."

She blinked confused and blushed, and before she could collect her thoughts, he was gone. It took her another few moments to finally shake her head smiling; then she, too, left the shop.

END

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### Coffee Shop

People change. Everyone will notice that during his or her own life. And suddenly, people will do things they wouldn't have been able to imagine doing before.

Like Teresa Lisbon. Lisbon had never been a morning person. But now she was noticing a change; or more, she had been noticing it for a few months. She was getting up early, already wide awake, not a hint of tiredness left. She would leave her apartment whistling happily an hour and a half before her working hours started, and she would spend the remaining time in a coffee shop not far away from the CBI headquarters.

She would take place in a nice little corner with her coffee and sometimes a chocolate filled croissant. She would read a book or the newspaper, or she would just sit there and watch people rushing in and out. It was quite noisy in the morning, and yet, in her corner, she could block away the annoying parts of noise and only savor the nice parts - the life of a city they were telling about.

No one of her work colleagues knew what she was doing every morning, and fortunately, no one had yet showed up in this coffee shop. Maybe because they just weren't the coffee shop types of persons.

Wayne Rigsby was a late riser, always a bit sleepy when he appeared at work in the morning; he probably got up as late as possible, only to then hurry and arrive just in time. He was never late, and he was always doing his job without giving any reasons to complain; it was just what she noticed.

Grace Van Pelt was too diligent to waste time for buying a coffee in a coffee shop. Lisbon was sure the junior agent was getting up early to eat her breakfast at home - as it was the best and most wealthy thing to do. Certainly Grace would drink decaffeinated coffee and eat cereals with milk and some fruits. And then she would leave her home a bit earlier than necessary, only to arrive at work always around ten minutes early.

And Kimball Cho just wasn't the one who would buy a coffee in a coffee shop; as a man who needed things to be simple and fast, he was happy enough with the coffee the small kitchen corner in their office offered. Cho was a stoic man, but he was also the agent she liked most. He was a constant, a tower of strength, and therefore a very important part of her team - but he was also oblivious to the little "goodies" the world held. Apart from his books maybe.

And then... there was Patrick Jane. The man who was chronically sleepless and was probably spending more time on the couch in the office than at home. Often he was already there when she came to work in the morning after he had spent another night on the couch. He wouldn't leave the building in the morning only to get himself a coffee from a coffee shop. She even doubted that he knew how a coffee shop looked from the inside - since he was a tea drinker.

So the risks of being disturbed were barely mentionable.

Sighing contentedly, she leaned back and closed her eyes. The sun was shining directly through the large panorama windows and into her face and the warmth of its beams tickled her a bit. The noises around her were slowly fading, while the flavor of coffee got stronger, especially when she lifted her cup to her face and breathed in deeply.

"Good morning, sunshine," a gentle and melodic male voice filled her ears and her lips formed a smile at the words; how wonderful would it be to be greeted like this every morning by a loving man? He would wake her gently in the morning, he would bring her breakfast, and he would tell her every day...

"Lisbon? Are you asleep?" the voice continued, still low and gentle, but this time sounding somehow familiar. Frowning, she opened her eyes. And suppressed a groan. So much about her quiet morning in her secret, not-known-by-the-team place.

"Jane?" She resisted the strong urge to stomp her feet and cry out. "What... are you doing here?"

"The desire for a croissant brought me here. And what about you?" He grinned innocently.

"The desire for some time *without certain people* brought me here," she answered through clenched teeth and shot him a death glare. She wasn't exactly angry, but maybe some acting would help to get rid of him.

Of course he totally ignored it, and continued babbling excitedly: "You know, they really have some very delicious stuff here. Besides coffee, I mean."

"And...?" She didn't really dare to ask.

"And I think you should taste some of these pastries. Um..." He looked around thoughtfully for a moment, then his eyes began to sparkle. "Give me five minutes, okay?"

"Jane, no, please, I...", she wanted to protest, but he was already gone. Capitulating, she leaned back again and shook her head. She only saw him walking to the counter, but couldn't see what he was doing - or buying. She still couldn't see it when he returned a few minutes later, because it was covered by a cloth.

"Let's play a little game," he exclaimed when he sat down that tablet with *whatever*.

"Jane, we have to go to work in-", she tried, but was interrupted by him.

"45 minutes, so there's still enough time left."

*Dear God, what have I done?* Not that she didn't like Jane - or his company, at least during car rides - but why wasn't she granted to have a quiet morning without anyone?

"Close your eyes."

"Huh?"

"Close your eyes," he repeated patiently.

"Ah... no?"

"Come on, it's gonna be fun. I promise you - it will be like tasting... the world." The winning smile, again. She sighed. So obviously she wouldn't get rid of him, whatever she said. Maybe playing along was the easiest way to end this tirade soon - and so she closed her eyes.

"Well?"

"Patience-"

"Don't you say it again," Lisbon warned before he could call her 'woman' again, as he had done it a while ago. Bad habit of his she definitely needed to break him of.

"Okay, okay, I won't." There was a short pause and she heard some rustling when he put away the cloth. "Now, open your mouth... attention... here comes the first test object..."

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To her surprise, most of the thing he gave her to taste them were delicious - much more than she remembered them to be. Maybe because she had closed her eyes and could concentrate on her sense of tasting; or maybe because he was forcing her to concentrate on it. Either way, it was pure indulgence.

Not so surprised was she about the fact that he made her enjoy herself. She should have known that there was no way to not enjoy his plans of cheering people up. Whether there was cheering up needed or not, a voice in her head added.

"Ready?" she heard him ask and she smiled.

"Yep," was her only answer before she opened her mouth so he could give her the next spoonful of some unknown pastry.

"sat if...," she began with her mouth full, only to remember her good manners and first chew the bite before continuing, "something with vanilla and raspberries. Very delicious."

"Correct. You're really good."

"I tell you a secret," she bent closer and lowered her voice, "I have a sweet tooth."

"Mh... I have to remember that," Jane grinned and tasted from the last treat himself. "You're right. This vanilla-raspberry-combination is indeed very good."

"And therefore I call our little game an end, so I can remember this tasty whatever-it-was. Because I don't think I could take more of these sweets." She laughed lightly and opened her eyes to meet his.

"Oh... too bad. But we have to repeat that sometime. You know... I can think of some more things to taste. Some sweeter things." Lisbon stared at him open-mouthed when he winked at her and left the coffee shop. Her mind was still debating if his comment had been as suggestive as she had understood it when she drank the last bit of her coffee - her now awfully bitter coffee - and then, too, left for work.

END

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*There was this scene in Tess' office in the episode "Russet Potatoes" where you could see pictures on her desk - pictures of dogs. I don't know if they're actually Golden Retrievers (I don't know much about dogs), so if anyone has a suggestion or idea I'd love to hear them! :)*

### Family routines

Routines. Routines were what made the little bit of tidiness in the chaos of her life. And she needed these moments of routines and tidiness.

One of these routines was jogging. Every morning - or evening, depending on when she had the time to - she jogged for half an hour; through the nearby park, a forest, or simply along the streets.

It was relaxing and it cleared her mind. It made her either fit for the day or tired her enough to sleep peacefully after a day of work. What didn't mean that she didn't jog on her days off, too.

Today Teresa Lisbon had a day off - and she run on one of her favorite routes. It was a quiet, barely frequented way through a small forest. Since she needed to come here by her car because it wasn't as close to her home as most of the other routes, she saved it for the days she had enough time. She simply loved its smell, its sound, its look - a bit like her imagination of a magical forest.

On her runs she was always accompanied by two lovely beings - her dogs Ava and Benji. The Golden retrievers - brother and sister - were three years old and the closest she had for a family. Surely she still had her brothers, but both men lived far away from Sacramento - too far to see them more often than a few times a year. But Lisbon needed some kind of family; someone to come home to, who was happy to see her when she came home in the evening. She needed to feel loved and welcomed.

Lisbon was very lucky to have two dogs who didn't resent her being away from home so long and often. She took every possibility to spend time with them; to go for a walk or, in this case, jog with them. And play with them. A boy who was living in her apartment building took Ava and Benji out every noon or early afternoon when he came

home from school; this way he earned a bit money and the dogs didn't have to sit and wait the whole day for her to come home and go with them for a walk.

But whenever she had the time to, she spent it with Ava and Benji. They loved playing and fooling around. In the forest, they ran around her while she, at a moderate pace, jogged and just smiled at them. They frolicked, ran ahead and came back, only to again run away in every possible direction. They would do it until they reached a small clearing they used to play on. Only this time, Ava suddenly stopped before her with a stick. The female dog and her brother hadn't done this in a while. Normally they respected their mistress' desire to jog with a constant rhythm and didn't interrupt her until they came to the clearing. And normally, they wouldn't pick up a stick on their own, but only take those given to them by her.

Teresa slowly came to a stop, realizing that this certain clearing was only a few hundred meters away. So her dogs were in a very playful mood today and they just couldn't wait. The dark-haired woman only smiled and lovingly stroked and cuddled both animals.

"Hey you two, let's better play on the clearing. With my throwing skills you won't find the stick anymore after I've thrown it away in this forest once," Lisbon told her dogs and waved them to follow when she - with the stick still in her hand - again started to run, heading for the clearing. But her dogs passed her nevertheless, running straight towards the middle of the tree-free area.

First their mistress shook her head smiling - but then she stopped dead in her tracks. There was someone sitting in the high grass - and her dogs who normally didn't trust strangers easily were lying beside the person. A person who even from behind looked strangely familiar. Those clothes and the golden locks...

On her free days her mind was a bit slower than usual.

"Oh no," Lisbon growled when realization hit her. She closed her eyes momentarily and let out an exasperated sigh, then she called: "Jane? What are you doing here?!"

Her colleague turned around; a wide smile appeared on his face when he recognized his boss.

"I was just taking a walk through the forest and then decided to take a break when I discovered this cute little clearing," Patrick Jane answered genuinely and rose to come over to her. Ava and Benji followed him on the heels. "Hello, by the way. Nice to see you," he added when he reached her, but she ignored it.

"Why, by all means, are you taking a walk in this particular forest? It has to be - what? - 10 miles away from your home! Quite a long way to come here only to take a walk."

"So is it one for you," he simply stated, shrugging and petting Ava who just jumped up to leave sandy paw prints on Jane's jacket.

"Ava, stop it!" Lisbon commanded and pulled Ava behind her, effectively closing the distance between her and the blond-haired man by this. They looked at each other for a while, situation becoming somewhat weird when still no one had said anything even after a few minutes. The dogs were sitting next to them, Benji with Jane, Ava with Lisbon, looking up at their mistress and her acquaintance, friend maybe, who just didn't move or talk or... do anything else.

Finally, the silence became awkward even for Patrick, and so he moved his eyes to look at the dog beside him for a moment. Thoughtfully, he commented: "Seems like Benji likes some male company for a change."

Lisbon blinked.

"You know his name?"

"Of course."

He said it with such an air of confidence around him that she felt completely stupid when she dug deeper, asking, "How?" Patrick, as usual, smiled.

"Because I know you." He made a short pause, indicating by his expression that he was going to say something else, but his boss didn't let him.

"Not as good as you think or you would know that those two have male company every day." A beaten look crossed Jane's face.

"Oh really?" He sounded just the tiniest bit jealous. And hurt.

"Yes, a school boy takes them for a walk every early afternoon." An approving bark from Benji made them both flinch. And then chuckle.

"Well then, Miss Lisbon, even though you're accompanied by your dogs it isn't the wisest idea for a lady like you to walk through such a dark and dangerous forest all by yourself. May I accompany you and lead you to the beach you I guess were heading for?"

"Actually, I was heading for this particular clearing we are standing on because my dogs love to play here."

The grin on his face became suspiciously wide when he walked backwards, slowly at first, but then faster with every step. He spread out his arms, laughed happily and turned around himself; then he exclaimed: "Well then, what are you waiting for?"

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It felt good, she noticed. It felt good to laugh together, to play with the dogs while being in his company. It felt good to see the dogs like and play with someone else, though she had always thought she would probably be jealous should this happen because Ava and Benji were *her* family. She knew that when her dogs trusted someone, she also could. Because they had a much better knowledge of human nature than her.

It felt good spending time with him. And hearing him ask if they could meet accidentally again soon.

It felt like those meetings could eventually become a part of her life.

It felt almost a bit like a little family.

END

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### "Step By Step"

The name already should have made her turn around and leave as fast as possible. It should have told her: This can't end well. But she didn't listen to her gut and the voices in her head and what else was screaming to her to just ignore her brother's words. Well, challenge, actually.

She wanted to show him that she wouldn't make a complete fool of herself after she had claimed that she could dance. After he had challenged her to prove it at a 'Family & Friends' evening in about two and a half weeks. So now she had 16 - no, make that 15 - days to learn.

Teresa Lisbon had 15 days to learn at least the most important basics of dancing. In a dancing school called "Step By Step".

A mouse hole would have been more helpful at the moment. Preferably one with nice mice that would grant her asylum for a long time.

Lisbon sighed. It didn't help. She had to face the enemy, and she had to go inside and take those damn dancing lessons. She would show her brother - and the rest of the family - that she wasn't the social loser everyone always thought she was, and she would dance.

Only thing she needed to do now - besides learning to dance - was to make herself believe it, too.

Step by step. Well, wasn't such a bad idea for a start. And so she walked, step by step, up to and then through the door.

"Hi," she was immediately greeted by a young woman with happily bouncing red locks and an inviting smile. "You've been standing outside for a while, I noticed. Let me guess - you're not so sure about learning how to dance?"

Lisbon wanted to tell her that this was none of her business, but the woman's voice was full of warmth and sympathy, and so the CBI agent only nodded.

"Well then, let's see what I can do for you. First of all - sorry, my manners - I'm Melanie Jane, the owner of this dancing school. But my students call me Mel, so..."

Had 'Mel' not have been so busy showing Teresa around, she probably would have paid more attention to the dancing school owner's full name, but due to Mel's happy babbling and friendliness, there was only a tiny notion in the back of Lisbon's mind.

Half an hour later, Teresa and Mel were sitting in the owner's office, and Lisbon was signing her contract for a crash course of dancing lessons, including all basics and one dance she was free to choose.

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Already the next evening - it was a Friday - Lisbon had her first lesson. She arrived at the dancing school about fifteen minutes early and wanted to wait in her car, but Mel had been outside just when she had parked her car and spotted her before she could hide.

"Teresa! I'm glad to see you here. I have to admit I was a bit afraid that you wouldn't show up. Well, come on in, I'll introduce you to your teacher."

"Um... there's a coffee shop across the street and I wanted to get myself a coffee... there are still some minutes left, aren't there?" Lisbon, walking while she spoke, was already a few meters away from Mel, but the red-haired woman called her back.

"But we have coffee here as well! Come on, it's good to know your teacher before you start. And you will like Bill."

With a defeated sigh, the CBI agent followed Mel into the school. There wasn't any chance to escape anyway, so it didn't matter if she was going inside now or in a few minutes.

Bill Rowley was indeed a very nice and friendly person. And, above all, extremely handsome. Dark eyes matched dark hair and although he was more or less the cliché of a Latin lover, he lacked of typical macho manners. He was just friendly, a gentleman. He reminded her a bit of Patrick Jane.

But that thought she shoved away very quickly.

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"Alright, dear class, one week of dancing lessons and you already move like pros. I'm very proud of you. Now that you understand the basics, we'll go on with your chosen dance."

Content murmur was heard from the small group and Lisbon smiled up at Bill who was standing next to her. She indeed had had a nice week; she had been better than she had thought and not as clumsy as she had feared, but she knew that much credit for this also went to Bill. He was a great and very patient teacher and above all, he was funny and a real gentleman. After five days, he had taken her out to a nice little restaurant, and they had spent a wonderful evening together; he had brought her home and said goodnight with a gently kiss on her cheek.

And Teresa knew that she was more than willing to make a lot more of this harmless kiss.

She took Bill's hand when Mel explained that this evening was also for learning, but mainly for fun. There was going to be some small party, and it should help the students finding their own personal rhythm. Bill squeezed her hand lightly and she couldn't help but grin.

She loved these dancing lessons more and more.

"But before we start, I'd like to show you my favorite dance - the Slow Foxtrot, also known as Slowfox. Therefore, I need a partner with perfect dancing skills," Lisbon was about to release Bill's hand, sure that Mel meant him, "and that would be my brother - Patrick." And she released her partner's hand - but of shock. She didn't even notice him excusing himself and leaving the room; she was completely paralyzed by the blond man next to Mel. She didn't want to believe that it was really her colleague and personal nuisance - okay, very helpful nuisance - Patrick Jane who now began to dance to some beautiful music.

Not so much of a surprise - knowing Patrick Jane - he was quite a good dancer. He was twirling his sister over the dance floor and it looked like he had never done anything else. They floated, they flew, they didn't even seem to touch the ground. They were lost in their own world, a world that obviously didn't know any laws of physics. They were glowing with happiness; they were perfection.

Hadn't Mel been his sister, Teresa would have been almost jealous.

Lisbon snapped out of her fascination at that thought. Jealous? She didn't even have the right to be jealous. She never would have. No, never.

She stopped herself from thinking any further and tried to concentrate on the couple again, but failed; she simply couldn't focus. Sighing, she carefully made her way through the small crowd she had been effectively hiding in, hoping that Jane wouldn't spot her, and slipped through the door. Some cold water in her face would do wonders, she was sure.

Lost in thought, she ran into two young men - one of them she recognized as Bill, the other she had never seen before.

"Hey," she greeted her dancing partner and teacher happily, briefly wondering when he had went outside, and smiled widely when he leaned forward and kissed her - even though it was again only on the cheek.

"Tess," he replied warmly, using the nickname he had found for her, "may I introduce you to someone? This is my boyfriend, Adrian. Would you mind if I dance with him once or twice this evening?"

Suddenly, there was one word in big, fat letters written over the picture of the couple in front of her: *Cliché*.

Shaking her head, she forced herself to smile when she managed the standard answers - *Nice to meet you!* and *No, of course I don't mind!* - and then said that she needed to use the bathroom, only to escape as fast as possible. This had to be a physical law either - whenever one of her days started well, they had to end in a disaster.

She considered going home, sure that she would make a complete fool of herself if she not already had. She just hoped Bill hadn't noticed her glowing - in the true sense of the word - interest in him.

The cold water did wonders to her completely messed up mind. A cold shower would have been more effective, but she took what she got; it was better than nothing. She took a long look into the mirror, looking herself into the eyes. Why couldn't just one evening like this one go well for once? It simply wasn't fair, the chaos in her private and especially her love life.

*Which love life?* - Oh, shut up!

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"Good Evening, Miss Lisbon," a well-known voice greeted her warmly as soon as she entered the dance hall again.

So much about plans that didn't work out. Avoiding Jane - status: failed.

"Jane. Nice to see you," she responded, not looking at him, but concentrating on the people on the dance floor, and as hard as she tried, she couldn't held back the sigh escaping her lips while she spoke.

"Especially since you didn't even look at me," Jane gave back with a hint of amusement in his voice. She continued trying her best to keep herself busy watching the dancing couples; but when his hand slid into hers, she knew that she didn't have a chance anyways, and so she finally gave in and glanced over at him.

"Would you allow me that dance?" Simply nodding, Lisbon let herself pull towards the middle of the dance floor.

The song that was playing was slow and gentle, and exactly like that Jane adjusted her body against his, her hands in his and on his shoulder, and his free arm around her.

And then he moved. Simply moved, without waiting for her to analyze the music so she would know where to put her feet. Without waiting for her to be ready. He just moved and expected her to move with him, to know which steps to take, where to go... and she did.

She just moved. Knowing instinctively where to set her feet, how to swing and turn her body. She didn't hear the music - she felt it. With every fiber of her body felt it and let it lead her. As well as she let Patrick lead her. Her feet barely touched the ground, she felt light; she felt *right* there. What she had thought before about Jane and Mel happened now for her. It was like she, like they had never done anything else. She forget to concentrate, she just danced. In Patrick Jane's arms.

When the song ended, she only unwillingly stopped her movements. Patrick smiled at her when she looked up, and then leaned close.

"You're friends will be speechless," he whispered into her ear before he let go of her.

END

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*I have to admit that one part of the idea is somehow stolen from a movie I can't get enough of - "Never Been Kissed". It's only a tiny part, but it's quite important, therefore it's only fair to mention the origin here. ;)*

*Um... no idea what happened, but this one suddenly got out of hand and became very... soppy. And romantic. More than I had ever intended it to be. Sorry. \*g\**

### Fair

Standing in the middle of a huge crowd. Surrounded by noise, children and adults laughing and screaming happily. Smelling roasted chestnuts - it wasn't even close to Christmas - and countless other kinds of sweets, their flavors invading her nostrils - and mind. The dark night air seemed to glow with all colors of lights, some shining, some blinking, some writing words in the sky, thankful for the clouds that caught the lights and reflected them.

It was chaos. Happy chaos, but chaos nonetheless.

Not for the first time in the last hour Teresa Lisbon wondered what she was doing here. On a fairground! She should have stayed at home.

But, little Ricky had so desperately wanted to come here - and who was "Auntie Resa" to decline her nephew such a wish? The boy had always loved fairs, ever since he'd been an infant of not even two years, and his parents had to visit each of these festivals in a fifty mile radius. Now he was nearly seven and still couldn't get enough of carousels and big wheels and roller coasters and ghost trains and everything else to be found in these places.

And while he loved fairs, he also loved his aunt. He saw Auntie Resa not often, but when he visited her with his parents - or she visited him - he liked to spend as much time with her as possible. As soon as they had arrived in Sacramento, he had spotted the announcement banners and he had practically begged his aunt to accompany him to the big "Summer Nights Fair" in the heart of the city. And of course Lisbon had given in, never able to deny her little sunshine a wish.

Together with Alan, her brother and Ricky's father, as well as the little boy's mother, Teresa's sister-in-law Marcia, aunt and nephew set off for the fair on a Saturday afternoon.

That had been a few hours ago. Meanwhile, it was evening, already dark, but the masses of people gave an impression of standing at New York's central train station.

At some time, she had lost Alan, Marcia and Ricky; they had simply vanished in the crowd. It had been like one of those scenarios in these Disaster films, where masses of people run around headlessly and families and friends got separated from each other, only here it all happened without the panic and desperation and horror.

Well. Maybe a bit of horror. At least for her.

Lisbon sighed. Neither Alan nor Marcia heard their mobiles; probably because it was too loud. It was even too loud to hear the own *thoughts*. She needed a pause, she decided. And the best way to gain some distance to the engulfing crowd was, besides returning home - an option she not yet wanted to pursue, still hoping to find her brother and his family - finding a place out of the thick things. And where to go on a fair for a bit time alone than into a nice and cozy gondola of a Ferris wheel?

Almost happily the dark-haired CBI agent headed for the amusement ride that wasn't so far away from her current position. Reaching it within only a few minutes - with some bruises thanks to various unyielding elbows and other rather pointed objects on her way, but she couldn't have cared less - she bought a ticket - for five rounds actually - and approached the not-as-long-as-she-had-feared-queue. Already a few minutes later, she could claim her own Ferris wheel gondola, in which she sat down smilingly.

Unfortunately, the smile was doomed to fade seconds later, when the employee and placer stepped next to her with a grim face.

"Hey, lady," he snapped, "no one-person-rides. Can't you read? Stands there on the sign in big, fat letters; now get yourself some company, then you can come back."

"But I've paid!" Lisbon protested, stubbornly folding her arms, indicating that she wasn't about to leave the gondola.

"Doesn't matter, you're not allowed to be alone in one car, it's what the terms of business say. Better read them first next time. Now out!"

"Gentleman, that really isn't how you should talk to a lady," suddenly a voice behind the unfriendly man made the particular man and Lisbon look up. The man, because he wanted to see who dared to order him how to behave and talk. Lisbon, because she, despite all the noise around her, instantly recognized the voice.

"Jane?" she asked incredulously. Rhetorical question, really, but *what was he doing here?*

"If you don't mind, milady, than I will accompany you on your trip," he briefly looked up and then back at her, "to the stars."

"Stop babbling and get in," the placer groaned and chased the other man into the gondola.

"Thanks," Lisbon mumbled, barely understandable, but Jane heard it nevertheless. Smiling winningly, he responded with a simple "You're welcome." when the wheel began to move.

"Ah, the fresh air up here. Great. And the view. The view! Look, Teresa, isn't that beautiful? You can see half the city," Jane chattered when they reached the upper half and his boss needed a moment to realize his use of her first name. But she decided it to be no drama and let him get away with it.

"Yes. Beautiful indeed," she instead answered and let her eyes wander over the fair and then the city, its lights telling of the busy and lively activity, even at night time. When she felt Jane taking her hand in his, gently caressing it, her heart skipped a beat.

"Surrounded by sparkling lights. And sparkling beauty," the man next to her then whispered into her ear and she instantly knew that with the last part he didn't mean the impressions and images around them. Because there was something in his voice that made her *feel* these words.

Slowly she turned her head, her eyes meeting his. In the blink of an eye, he had closed the distance between their faces, and kissed her softly. She found herself responding to the caressing movements of his lips, her stomach funnily flipping and her heart pounding with a certainly very unhealthy beat. His free hand came to cup her face, warming it in the fresh air up atop the Ferris wheel.

When he pulled back, almost carefully as if afraid to break something by losing contact, her eyes remained closed and she willingly let herself pull against his body, snuggling close to him.

Only when their gondola lifted to the top of the wheel - that was spinning around very slowly - for the second time, she opened her eyes again. And somehow, the lights around her seemed to shine with just a little more warmth up to her.

END

*And her brother and his family? They were still whirling through the crowd below, stopping here and there, and just soaking in the happiness that lay like a soft layer of cotton over the whole place.*

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## Beach

A long weekend. Two days off, plus two days weekend. Oh, she had waited a long time for this. And now she was so going to make something great of it.

It was early Thursday midmorning when Teresa Lisbon got up. Not quite; at first she wriggled back her blanket with her legs, only to then stretch extensively - in a manner that would have put every cat's stretching scheme to shame. There was no part of her body that didn't get thorough stretching attention.

Only after what must have been around fifteen minutes, she finally got up, tapped into the kitchen and turned on the coffee machine. Freshly brewed coffee was just another part of her personal spoiling program; normally, she would get her first coffee of the day from a coffee shop or simply from the coffee machine in the office.

But not today. Today she wanted the whole, the complete program, and that included one or two cups of fresh coffee she would drink while sitting in one of her comfortable armchairs in the living room and reading the morning newspaper.

It also included visiting the beach, something she hadn't done for ages. Not for fun at least. But the weather was perfect, and her new - meaning "never used, but having been stored in her wardrobe for a few years" - bikini just waited to see the ocean. So as soon as she had finished her coffee, now well informed about what had lately been going on in the world, she packed her back and headed for the beach.

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It was an almost divine feeling, being bathed in the sunlight, the beams tickling her skin. She had chosen a place behind a small rock formation, a little secret nook on the mile-wide beach she had once discovered and always waited for to use. There were only a few people around, while the majority of bathers and sun-seekers were around a mile down the beach. Probably because the part Lisbon was residing was quite stony - apart from those little nooks like the one she had claimed. There warm and soft sand invited to lie and relax on.

An hour earlier, she had tested the water and swum as far as it was allowed, only to then return and rest for a while in the shallow water near the beach. Gentle waves had swapped over her skin, caressed it, and cooled it in the hot sunbeams.

After she had returned to her nook and towel, she had eaten something and then stretched out on her towel and the warm sand to rest.

It could have been perfect. A perfect way to spend a perfect day.

Could have. Hadn't it been for the shadow that was suddenly blocking her sun.

Unwillingly, she cracked open one eye and tried to recognize the person standing there right next to her. But a bit blind due to the sun that had been bright even through her eyelids, and thanks the fact that she now had to look against the sun, she didn't see much.

"I hope there is a good reason for you blocking my sunlight," she mumbled, not caring about greeting the stranger. *Intruder.*

"Just thought that red isn't exactly your color," a well-known voice answered and she could *hear* the grin.

"Jane?!"

"Nice bikini, Lisbon." Patrick Jane's voice was cheekier than usual; but the chuckle that followed his words sounded as always. Rapidly, she sat up and almost panicking, she searched for something to cover herself until she found the sun-dress she had been wearing when she had come here, and pressed it against her body.

"What the hell are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at work?" Lisbon jumped a bit when he slumped down in the sand beside her. As far as she could tell, since her eyes still tried to adjust to the light, Jane shrugged.

"Without you there, they didn't want me. No one wants to take responsibility for me," he explained, and this time she saw his face - and the smirk on it.

"You sneaked out." It wasn't a question. Two years working with Patrick Jane and she didn't need to ask such things anymore.

"I knew you would come here and no one can rub sun cream into the own back. So I came here to help. I'm sure Minelli approves this; he wouldn't need a senior agent with a terrible sunburn."

"You're too kind."

"That's me," Jane exclaimed happily and spotted Lisbon's sun cream. Commenting it with an "ah", he took the tube and looked at her expectantly. When she didn't move, he frowned at her and asked, "You going to turn around?"

"You going to tell me the truth?" she gave back, imitating him.

"It is the truth. Well, the combination of what I said. They wanted me to do paperwork and didn't take me with them when they went to the crime scene, so I sneaked out. Sent Rigsby a message, though. And then left my mobile in the office."

"You're such a child!" Lisbon scolded and shook her head.

"No, I'm just concerned about your health," he protested, still holding the tube, ready for the planned action. "So? Turn around."

"No."

"Alright, then," were his next words before he stood up, pulled his t-shirt over his head and took off his jeans - she hadn't realized he wasn't wearing his usual suit until now - and, left only in Bermuda shorts, he bent down and picked her up.

"Jane!? What are you... no... oh no, don't you dare... Jane... no!" she shrieked and struggled in his arms, but he remained unimpressed by her actions when he carried her towards the ocean.

"I've put on sun cream! And my back was never in the sun!" she tried to put him off his obvious plan of throwing her into the water.

"Sooner or later it would have been. And besides, your skin is so hot, it needs some cooling anyways." And with that, he had reached the deeper water and threw her in, before he dove in himself. When he came up, Lisbon had also reached the surface again.

"Your so..." Cough. "So..." Cough. "Gonna regret..." Cough. "This!" And another cough and a deep, shaky intake of breath.

"Feeling cooler now?" He grinned at her when she gave him a look that for sure was able to kill.

"Oh, you...!" And then she launched herself at him, pushing him underwater with all the force her small body held. It took Jane by surprise, and soon he shared her fate of getting water into his lungs. He came up, coughing like she had seconds before.

"Are we even now?" he asked when he was able to speak again. She thought about it for a moment.

"Think so."

"Good. Come on, let's swim a bit." Jane dove into the waves and took some forceful swim strokes before he realized that Lisbon wasn't following him. Puzzled, he came to a halt and turned around.

His dark-haired colleague just headed for the beach - she just wasn't in the mood for swimming; she rather wanted to resume her sun bath.

"Where do you think you're going?" he called after her, a hint of irritation in his voice. He had made a big effort to get her into the water, and now she was simply leaving.

"Out of the water," she replied in a sing-song voice, not looking back.

"Wait a moment, that's not what I meant!" He managed to follow her and catch her in time, diving underwater and grabbing her ankles so that she wavered a bit and fell back into the water. "You're supposed to stay here and... swim."

"Jane, what is this? You're behaving very strange, to say at least."

"What are you talking about? I don't behave strange."

"Yes, you do. So, what is it? A bet? With Rigsby? God, Jane, how often have I told you..."

"Alright, alright. You've won. But me, too," he grinned widely.

"Let me guess - I don't want to know?" The grin stayed plastered on his face, and it was all she needed as an answer. She only shook her head. He was right - she didn't want to know. Some things better remained unknown. "May I at least go back to my definitely deserved relaxing?"

"No," he simply answered - and emphasized it with one of his hands splashing water into her direction. She looked sternly at him, but otherwise didn't react; instead she made a new attempt to leave to water. Until another splash hit her from behind, with more intensity this time.

"You want war?" she asked, with her back still to him. "You get war." And with that, she quickly turned around and pushed her hands against the surface, producing a big splash that covered him completely. Not ten seconds later, they fought frantically, their hands as their weapons shoving the water against each other. Patrick's blond locks were a mixture of wet, curled strands and countless droplets, while Teresa's dark hair clung to her neck and shoulders and face.

They were equally good, splashing and diving and trying to get away, although especially the latter wasn't easy. Splashes hit them repeatedly, and once or twice, Lisbon gave a squealing sound Jane thought he needed to remember. Only after what must have been a good ten minutes, they slowly but surely stilled their movements and looked at each other.

"Truce?"

"Sounds good," she smiled, and looked puzzled at him when he approached her. Despite his exhaustion, he easily lifted her into his arms - ignoring her protest this time like he had before - and carried her towards her towel where he laid her down on one half of the huge cloth. He claimed the other half, lying down beside her. For a few minutes, they savored the sun warming and drying them.

"Perfect," Jane commented quietly after a while.

"Yep."

"Should do that more often."

"Yep."

"Thanks." Lisbon turned her head to look at him.

"No. Thank you." She placed a short but sweet kiss on his cheek, only to add whispering, "And - you're welcome."

END