

## Salvation

Author: CK

Rating: P18 / M

Contents: "The day of reckoning is close. Be prepared." That was all the letter from Red John said. But it was all he needed.

Disclaimer: Show doesn't belong to me, but to Bruno Heller, his team and CBS - to be honest, I wouldn't want to own it anyway, because in my opinion, Mr. Heller and his team do a fantastic job and as far as I'm concerned - I wouldn't be able to do it better!

Characters: Lisbon and Jane - and Red John. Barely any mention of Rigsby, Van Pelt and Cho, though nevertheless, it will be EST Van Pelt/Rigsby.

Author's Note: As you will notice, the story is mostly OOC, at least from our nowadays perspective. Originally it was planned to set the story at the end of season one. Since the spoilers said something about Red John in the season finale and that things were going to get revealed it seemed like a good idea. At this time, I also had a slightly different concept. But then I read an interview with Bruno Heller where he said that the storyline wasn't going to be solved before the end of the show. So I changed some things - and this is the result. As for OCC - I think that it is possible for the characters to act this way - in six (seven... eight... depends on how long the show will go on ;) ) years maybe. This is where the story is set now - in the future, as it is my idea of what might happen in the last episode of the show, the final Red John episode (although then it won't have the high rating and some certain scenes).

I have been thinking very long whether to post this story. It might be too early - it might be too "far away". But in the end I decided that I don't want to wait any longer (I guess it wouldn't have helped to edit the story for the umpteenth time...) and now just hope that you will like it.

Unfortunately, I again didn't have a beta reader (but if there are any volunteers, I'd be very happy ;)). So I'm sorry for the mistakes.

I'm also sorry that there's nearly more text in the Author's Note than in the prologue, but I promise that I will post the first chapter tomorrow (at the latest).

*And one last thing, a WARNING: This story is not suitable for kids - it will contain violence as well as sexual content!*

---

### Prologue

*It hadn't been a good week to start with. The first message on Monday morning had been that Red John had killed again. Three women this time; stunned and then cut open, like the killer always did. They had rushed to the crime scene, Jane as always believing that it was only a copycat killer - until they had stepped into the room. And all color had left Jane's face. Lisbon hadn't needed to ask if this had been done by the real Red John this time.*

*To make it only worse, they had found a letter, written with blood and addressed to Jane - from Red John.*

**The day of reckoning is close. Be prepared.**

*It had said nothing else. Forensics of course hadn't been able to find any traces on the piece of paper, apart from the victims' blood. But no one doubted its genuineness.*

*It had been the twelfth anniversary of Jane's family's death. It simply had to have a meaning - otherwise it was the worst joke they had ever been confronted with.*

*When they came back in the evening, their consultant didn't patter and banter, didn't have any comments on his lips; he didn't throw himself onto the sofa to take a nap. No - he instead wordlessly took his stuff and left.*

*He was as wordless in the next morning. Investigations regarding the murders of the women went successful, as far as this was possible; everything that was to find out they did, just not who or where Red John was. But they hadn't really hoped to find him anyway. And while the investigation went as "usual", Jane's behavior was anything but usual. He was quiet, didn't comment on anything; he hardly said anything at all.*

*And one afternoon, he just vanished.*

---

"Where's Jane?"

Teresa Lisbon looked around, searching for her colleague and team's consultant. She had tried to have an eye on him in these past days, for his behavior was almost alarmingly strange. From the moment Jane had corroborated that the women had been murdered by Red John something had told her that the message on the letter foreboded the one thing she had to admit she truly feared - that the meeting between Jane and the serial killer would actually happen now. So she suspected something really bad when the man who had become a friend to her and her team over the past years wasn't present during their working hours.

"He left about twenty minutes ago. Didn't he-?" Van Pelt informed, but was interrupted by her boss.

"No, of course he didn't tell me. And let me guess - he didn't tell you either where he went, right?"

"He just got a phone call, became very quiet, didn't answer the caller, and then left."

"Idiot," Lisbon muttered to herself and earned some confused looks. Grabbing her coat, she shortly informed, "The caller was Red John!" Then she, too, left.

And she hoped that this very moment wasn't the beginning of the ending.

---

## Chapter 1

There were few things in his life he didn't understand. Yes, he had been waiting for a message from Red John. He had always known it wasn't over; he had hoped it would be, but never really believed in it. This was more than Red John's usual murders. This was personal. One didn't need to be a psychic to know that this hadn't been the last time Jane had heard from the psychotic serial killer who probably thought his honor had been hurt. But why felt this person the obviously desperate need to continue torturing him? Hadn't he suffered enough?

The letter, the photos and the small pendant Red John had left him where Patrick had found them on the floor of his former bedroom after the call was definitely one part of the torture. Seeing his wife and daughter on these pictures, holding this pendant that had belonged to his daughter, and reading a letter that was so full of cynicism and scorn was more painful than any physical harm someone could have done to him.

He had never been able to ban the pictures of his murdered family from his mind; it had made him break down, it had made him lose his mind and hate the world. And now he had to look at them again, not only in his dreams, but also in reality - where he had hoped to never see them again. They were Red John's way to announce that it still wasn't over - and that they would meet soon.

Finally. Finally, he would meet the person who had done this, who had taken away his life, his future. Finally, it could - and would - end.

Was he ready for it? He didn't know. All those years he had thought that he had been ready since the evening he had found his family dead. But now that the day was nearing, everything seemed to be new and unknown. He feared the confrontation, and desperately waited for it at the same time. Though he had no idea what this was going to lead to, or how and where and when it was going to end, he knew that this maybe was some kind of final fight. And that it was his only chance to end the deadly cruelty that was inhering this person.

He already had lost everything - and yet it felt as it could happen again.

His life had changed a lot in the past years. A team of colleagues had slowly become a team of friends, and with them, he again had something to live for. Besides his desire for vengeance.

It was part of his own happiness, seeing the team laugh and joke; seeing them rely on each other, not only professional, but also personal. And it was even greater to see them love - *in* love - like Grace and Wayne. It had taken five years and a lot of work from him, Lisbon and Cho to hook them up; and now they probably were the cutest couple he knew.

His friends - even if unintentionally - pointed out to him every day that he needed to go on with his life, to leave the past behind him - and that they would help him to do so. He knew they understood what was driving him; they had never really expected him abandon his plans. They had only showed him that there was a life after Red John and the death of his family. And yes, they were right - but then, he simply couldn't end this chapter of his life. Something was missing. Something like a solution. An end. Because there was still a killer out there, and he was still murdering women - too many in the last years. And that ultimately brought him back to his plans of freeing the world - and his own life and dreams - of Red John.

The cruelty challenged Jane. And he would challenge Red John - or more his life. At every cost.

---

Teresa Lisbon had never been driven by irrational emotions and fears. She was controlled, she was reasonable, and she tried to make the world just a bit better by doing her job as best as she could. She abided by the law; she was law enforcement, after all.

But knowing that Patrick Jane was probably about to do something very stupid made her forget her every decision she had ever taken. She feared him becoming a murderer. She feared him being killed. She feared losing him. And so she followed him any further thought.

Lisbon could only hope she had guessed right when she had considered him to be at home. Something had just happened, something that brought everything, the cruel events from twelve years ago, back. And this something had to lead back to where it all had begun - his house.

She wanted to yell at Jane for not trusting her, for not telling her what was up. Once he had told her that he trusted her. And he had all those years, no matter how hopeless the situation was. But all that seemed to be forgotten now. Since this case had started, he didn't come to her anymore. He was turning away from her, his job, the team, everything and everyone. He didn't smile anymore; nothing of the charming, ever-positive man was left. He was only a mere hollow figure of himself.

And it frightened her.

As much trouble as Jane caused her, he was also one of the most important constants in her life. He was there, he was smiling, he sometimes made her day, he helped them and solved their cases. After seven years, he was still annoying - but he was even more indispensable. He had become so important not only to her, but also to her team. He had made friends of the five of them and given them some private life, while they before all had only lived for the job. And the last thing she wanted was to lose him - in any way.

She felt some relief when she arrived at his house and saw his Citroën still standing there. This possibly meant he hadn't left yet, if he was going to leave at all. Now most important was that Red John wasn't in his house again.

Jane's house looked impressive. It was modern architecture style, with geometric forms and lines, and big windows. It looked a bit like a pile of huge wooden boxes - expensive wooden boxes, of course. It wasn't exactly the style she was expecting with a man who mostly seemed to understand himself as an old-fashioned gentleman, who wore business suits and vests, what definitely wasn't part of what was defined by 'modern lifestyle'.

Lisbon parked her car next to his. When she got out, she immediately smelled the salty, fresh air that came from the ocean; and she heard the waves whipping up the surf. Sitting on the terrace she had seen on one side of the house probably was very calming.

She looked around for another moment before she walked up to his door and rang the doorbell. She heard the ringing inside the house; a smooth sound of two heavy, old bells swinging and bringing out deep gongs. It was another thing that didn't suit the house; it sounded more like the bell of an old manor.

"You shouldn't have come here."

That was all Jane said to her when he opened the front door and saw Lisbon standing outside.

"Nice to see you, too," she replied sarcastically and followed him inside, closing the door behind her. She didn't notice that he walked away because when she turned around she saw in what kind of modern villa she had just entered. She had never been in his house before, and she couldn't stop herself from looking around curiously for a moment. It was even more impressive inside.

Light from outside was flooding it, coming through the high windows the outer walls of the first floor were mainly composed of. The living room was so spacious that her entire apartment would have fitted into it and the open kitchen would have made every restaurant's kitchen jealous. The wooden colors made everything look warm and inviting, the red and brown and beige colors gave the impression of being comfortable and warm on a stormy fall's day, when one would snuggle into a soft woolen blanket in front of the fireplace. It looked like something where one could feel at home.

The garden or whatever the area around the house should be... she couldn't even see the end of the land the building was standing on. There was no fence or something similar around, nor were there neighbors; the only connection to the rest of the world - the civilization - was a single small street leading up to the house.

It was a perfect place for a murder; and for murderers who loved to take their time.

The thought brought her back to the here and now and suddenly she realized that the rooms, obviously the complete house, were empty. Besides the fitted kitchen, there was no furniture around; not even a chair or table. It looked bald and deserted, dead and - in contrast to the colors - cold. It seemed to be newly built, like no one was living in it, and to know that Jane had never moved out, but the house possibly had been without furniture and decorations for many years now was disturbing in some way.

She wondered if he had ever considered moving out, and for a moment she thought about asking him about, but then decided against it. She couldn't have asked him anyway, she noticed - because he was nowhere to be seen.

"Jane?" she called and spotted the stairs that led to the second floor. He didn't answer, but she was sure that he was still in the house, so she walked closer to the stairs and asked for him loudly again.

This time, he appeared at the top of the stairs, looking down at her with expressionless eyes, making no attempt to come down.

"Just go. Trust me, it's better-"

"Leave it, Jane, I won't go and you know it. Come down and we'll talk, and maybe we'll find a solution we both like."

"There is one solution - and there's no other way. Not anymore. Not now that I'm so close. I'm sorry," he said, with an almost apologetically tone of voice. Nevertheless, he walked down the stairs, but didn't stop when he reached her; he just passed her and walked into the living room.

"Look around," he said, turning around himself, "that's what is left of my life. A house, as empty as me. He took away everything from me, Lisbon. Everything that ever mattered to me. Do you really think there could be even one reason that would stop me, that would hold me back from meeting and hopefully killing this man?"

"I understand-"

"No, you don't," he contradicted before she could even end the sentence. He sounded bitter and coming from Patrick Jane, it was a shocking sound. "How could you?"

"You think you're the only one who has lost someone you've loved more than anything?"

He froze. Her mother. Yes, he remembered, although she had never told the whole story. And he hadn't been able to find it out on his own either.

"I..." He closed his eyes for a moment. "It's different, nevertheless. I have the chance to change something."

"Killing someone will not change anything, Jane! It will only..." Her voice became soft and pleading for her next words. "It will only make you hate yourself."

The sound of his mobile vibrating startled them, and kept him from answering. She looked curiously at him when he read the text message he had just received - and needed a moment to realize what was going on when he grabbed a bag that was standing in a niche across the front door, and then made the attempt to leave the house.

"Where are you going? Jane?!" she called after him, but he didn't react. He had nearly reached the door when she quickly walked past him and positioned herself between him and the front entrance.

"You know where I'm going. Now let me," he stated and tried to push her aside, but she was relentless. He didn't want to hurt her, so he gave in - for the moment.

"No. I will not you let go and face him alone. You don't even know how to defend yourself hand to hand, and you don't have any weapons. That's too dangerous."

"It's a danger I'm ready and more than willing to face. And you won't stop me."

"Right. I will not stop you. But whatever you're going to say, I will come with you." With this, she stepped out of his way and let him pass. He walked through the door, leaving the house, but then turned around to face her.

"Lisbon, please. He told me to come alone. And I don't want you to come with me. I don't want you to run into something unknown and to force you to make decisions." His eyes pleaded her as much as his voice and words did, but that only made her want to go with him even more. She didn't want *him* to make decisions *he* was going to regret afterwards. She still felt the need and duty to take care of him. When he quickly walked to his car, she followed him without any further thought. She was already on the passenger's seat before he got into the car.

"Could you just stop it, please? I WILL come with you. Red John is a murder that is officially declared as highly dangerous. So this is a CBI case. I leave the team here, that's all you get as a compromise. But you won't get rid of me. So come on now, let's leave, it's still a long drive."

"I have to face this alone. He gives me the chance to bring this to an end. And you know, as I have once told you, I will kill him if I get the chance to. Please stay here. This might get ugly, uglier than we both may be able to guess now, and I don't want you to stand in the line of fire when it happens. I don't want you to get hurt," he tried again, noticing that she wasn't interrupting his pleas. Maybe she would listen to reason. Or maybe she was just being polite. However, he meant what he said - he was more afraid if her possibly getting hurt than anything else.

She remained silent for a few more seconds; then she turned to look at him. Her eyes showed so much that he felt overwhelmed. There was fierceness, there was hope, there was sadness and sympathy; and there was something he believed to identify as - love?

"Whatever happens, I will stand by your side. You've once told me that you will never let me down. And I won't either. You feel the need to kill Red John. So be it. But I will be there. I will not let you go there alone to face a crazy serial killer. I don't know what my role will be in this story. But I know for sure that I will not sit here and wait for a call that either tells me you've killed Red John or that he has killed you. If there's any chance, I'll try and prevent both deaths. If not, I'll at least do everything to save your life." She didn't know if she really meant her words or if she had only said it to end the discussion, to convince him that it was a good idea to take her with him.

But for whatever reason, her speech had been so passionate and unexpected that he had forgotten to breathe. He nearly gasped when she stopped; and while she didn't fully believe her own words, he believed them and her, that she would help him, in one way or another. And maybe he forgot that she wasn't the small, breakable, defenseless woman she sometimes looked like.

Without answering, he started the car.

---

## Chapter 2

"Have you heard anything from the boss?" Rigsby asked his colleagues when he entered the office.

"No, nothing. But ... I was just thinking ... *if* this is about Red John, then we should probably cover their backs." Van Pelt looked at the male agents of their team, her eyes asking them for their approval. Her words were acknowledged by two nodding heads, and she returned the gesture.

"We keep everything from Minelli as long as possible. Can you prevent someone from tracking down their cells?"

Van Pelt shook her head. "That isn't possible; we can only hope that he will only ask us and no one else."

"Maybe they need our help?" Cho thought aloud, checking his cell for messages. He had been waiting for a text or a call since Lisbon had left; they all had. The worst thing for them was to be forced to sit around and wait.

"I guess if they needed our help, Lisbon would have already called us."

"Unless they have-" Cho replied, but was interrupted by Rigsby coughing unusually loud - if one knew Rigsby, as Cho fortunately did one understood immediately that he should shut his mouth, so he did. A second later he knew why - Minelli had stepped into the team's office.

"I'm wondering where your boss and Mr. Jane are. Maybe you'd like to help me?" the older man began, looking sternly at the three agents.

"We don't have any idea, sir. Neither Lisbon nor Jane have contacted us yet," Van Pelt answered honestly. It was no surprise Minelli didn't seem very happy about her answer.

"Well, find them! And should you talk to them, tell them they better not follow Red John around on their own, or they don't have to return here," he bellowed, making the agents jump a bit. That the two were indeed following Red John - at least as far as the team knew - was a side note they decided not mention at the moment. It was already afternoon - they only needed to keep up the ruse for a few more hours before they could go home. When Minelli left they all pretended to work, when in fact their search for their colleagues began in earnest.

---

After a few hours of driving through the desert, Jane's and Lisbon's bodies screamed for some food, something to drink, and some solid ground to walk on.

Jane pulled up to a small diner that lay at a crossroad on the highway. The only other guests were the truckers who stopped for a bite to eat, and maybe a few hours of sleep in the cab of their truck. It had to be a lonely, sad life. And at the moment, Lisbon and Jane could relate.

"Good afternoon, my dears," the waitress greeted them and gave them the menus. "You want something to drink?"

"Coffee, black." Lisbon pulled the container of sugar to her side of the table.

"Tea. With milk, but please put the milk in first." Jane smiled weakly at the waitress in an attempt to soften his and Lisbon's lack of manners at the moment.

The nameless waitress raised one eyebrow. "Okay... I'll be back in a minute."

They looked at each other, then their eyes wandered around the diner before they met again. No one said anything for a few minutes until Lisbon groaned.

"Is that what we will do for the whole 'trip'?" she asked. "Sitting and silently glaring at each other or our surroundings?"

Jane frowned at her. "What do you mean?"

"That you barely say anything. You haven't for a few days. And it is very unnerving." She frowned when Jane gave her a confused look.

"Do I always have to be talkative?" he said, turning his gaze to the table top.

"It's normal for you to be talkative."

"It's not. I only am when there's something to talk about. And at the moment, there isn't."

There was another moment of silence, which was only broken by them each ordering a burger and fries when the waitress brought them their drinks. After pouring a generous amount of sugar into her coffee, Lisbon looked thoughtfully at the consultant. She could think of many things, actually, that he could tell her. And especially one thing in particular.

"You could tell me about them," she said at last.

"About whom?"

"Your family. Your wife and daughter." Patrick looked at her with a mixture of confusion and shock. And anxiety.

"Why...?"

"You are planning to avenge the deaths of your wife and child. Now that I'm part of that... mission... I want to know what is behind all this." She bit back a "and if it is worth it" knowing such a thought was only on her mind due to her mental and physical exhaustion.

"I have no idea what I should tell you," he answered after a few seconds of thinking and she could tell he was being honest. Over the years she had learned to discern whether or not he was lying about something.

"You loved them dearly and you are willing to run into maybe certain death for them. And you have nothing that you could tell me about them?" she began, sounding somewhat angry, but regained her composure and her tone softened. "Tell me what they were like. How you and your wife meet? Who did your daughter look like? I've known you for so long now and I think I know you quite well, but there are some things you've never told me and in my opinion, it is about time. You can talk about them. It doesn't hurt anyone. Keep the memories, the good ones, alive. Tell me about the good times."

He breathed in deeply. In some way, she was right. But that didn't make it easier. Where should he start? There was so much he could tell her, but was it really something he should talk about? But on the other hand - hadn't she become the most important part of his life and didn't she, if only because of this fact, deserve to know?

In the end, she was right, he had to admit - it wouldn't hurt anyone. So he again took a deep breath and began to speak.

"Sandra, my wife... she lived in our neighborhood when I was a boy. She and her family moved there when... when we were around thirteen. It was the classic girl/boy-thing. We liked each other, but never admitted it in front of our friends. That would have been 'uncool'. Well, for me, at least -- she told her friends of her interest in me and they told her to stay away from me.

We attended the same high school and of course we were in the same courses. Sooner or later we began to do our homework together after school and... well, we became a couple. But the relationship ended when we both went to different colleges."

He paused for a moment, looking much lost in thoughts and memories; Lisbon saw a small smile, but it was gone in the blink of an eye.

"It was only by pure chance that we met again a few years later. She... I was overwhelmed when I saw her for the first time in years. She was... beyond beautiful." His voice had become lower with every word till it was a mere whisper, thick with tears. "We married one month later. And when my daughter was born... I was the happiest man on earth. She was our little angel; always laughing, bringing so much life into our house. She loved to sing and to dance, and she loved the sea. She was my – our – definition of happiness." He swallowed hardly. "We had four years together. Then I lost everything."

He looked so terribly brokenhearted; and Lisbon felt responsible for it. Now she regretted having asked him to tell her about his earlier life. Carefully she moved her hand so that her fingertips were touching his; when he didn't pull his hand away - she had no idea why she had thought he would do it anyway - she covered it with hers.

"I... I would say I'm sorry but...", she paused, unsure how to formulate what she wanted to tell him. "But... I hate that phrase; I hated it from the day my mother died. Everyone said that they were sorry, but in the end for most of them it was only an empty phrase said out of politeness, especially when they would just turn away right after it and laugh and talk with others like everything was okay. So I know it doesn't help hearing it; it can make the pain even worse." She entwined her fingers with his. "I... I just want you to know that in some way, I know how you feel. And that I really wish I could... do something for you."



"You're already doing something. You are here." His face showed unexpected gratefulness when he spoke and she nodded; there was no need for an answer to that.

A loud thunder was heard outside and they simultaneously turned their heads to look through the windows.

"Why does weather always has to be so theatrical?" Lisbon murmured and Jane squeezed her hand slightly, this time the small smile stayed on his lips for a little while longer.

"Let's go," he simply said after another few minutes. They each emptied their cups before asking the waitress to make their order 'to go'. While they waited, Jane left some money on the table. Once they had their food, they left the diner.

They fell into a more comfortable silence sitting in the car, this time with Lisbon behind the wheel, each occupied with their own thoughts.

---

### Chapter 3

There had been no question about looking for a place for the night. It had been a long day, there were still a few miles left, and they didn't know yet where exactly they had to drive, so they pulled up in front of the first motel they saw. Luckily the rain had stopped, for there were a few steps to walk from their car to the main entrance. Had they arrived any earlier, they would have been soaked before they reached the reception area.

"Good evening," the elderly woman behind the counter said -- Martha, according to her nameplate. "If you want to rent a room, I'm afraid I have to tell you that there's only one double room left. No single bedrooms anymore."

Lisbon frowned at her. "What makes you think..."

"Darling, I've been working here for over 30 years now. Believe me, I can tell what kind of a relationship two people are in at first sight. And you two are colleagues."

"The CBI should engage her," the younger woman murmured, more to herself than to Jane; she had already noticed how absent-minded he was. Since she had taken over behind the wheel after their stop so Jane could rest, he had only stared at some undefined point with a lost expression in his eyes. She could only guess what the reason was.

Unbeknownst to Lisbon, she was right. Jane's mind was clouded with thoughts about the next day, the encounter with Red John, and what he was going to do, what would happen. It was too surreal to be true and yet Jane was sure that this time, he would meet the man who had become his arch-enemy in person. It was nagging at him, chipping away to the human being beneath his well-constructed mask.

"Although . . . well, if you don't mind me saying so, but - a double room probably isn't such a bad thing for you two." Martha smiled knowingly when Lisbon's eyes widened at her words. When she opened her mouth to protest, Martha quickly added, "Never mind. Here's your key. Go and get some sleep. You two look terribly tired."

Lisbon sighed, took the key, and thanked Martha. When Jane didn't move, she took his hand and pulled him with her.

---

Their room was nice, neat, and comfortable - a pleasant surprise, compared to what they were used to stay in when in a small town. The bed looked soft and inviting, and the bathroom was uncommonly spacious with a shower that was a bit larger than normally found in a motel.

"Is it okay when I take a shower first or do you want-" Jane began, only to be interrupted by Lisbon.

"No, it's okay. Just go," she nodded and gave him a gentle smile - a smile he didn't return. Only his eyes seemed to be wide awake when they thanked her; the rest of him looked lost and tired. She wanted to comfort him, but she also felt that this was his fight and that she couldn't do anything for him, whether she hugged him or not.

While he was in the bathroom, she tossed her bag onto one of the room's chairs - she had been able to persuade him to stop at her place so she could grab a few things - and took out what she was going to need for the night; then she decided that it was about time to update the team. Her three agents were together when she called Cho, even at this late hour, but it didn't really surprise her. They had become close over the years; and at least since Grace and Wayne had become a couple they spent most of their free time together - as a team and as friends.

After putting her on speaker, Cho informed her that they had been waiting for her call and that they had been deliberating if they should follow them to help her and Jane. But they had to decide against it, mostly because of Minelli - and because it was easier to ensure their boss and consultant weren't troubled with more problems than they already had.

Lisbon had guessed that Minelli wouldn't be happy about them vanishing so suddenly and she more than expected serious reprimands as soon as they would be back, but at the moment, she didn't care. It wasn't that she could have done anything to minimize the damage to her career, for it had been over the moment she had decided to follow Jane on her own account and accompany him without informing her boss or the team, also knowing that this would lead to doing things that were against the regulations.

Despite the whole situation, she had to smile at Cho's words; she was proud of her team, and she was happy to have them. One really could call them precious; they were an important part in her daily life. They all were there for each other; who could have asked for more? Nevertheless it didn't mean that she wanted to risk their careers or jobs. And so she told them to do their work and tell Minelli everything they knew - which wasn't much, as she had wisely told them only the most necessary things, but not where they were.

Of course they protested. They even argued with her. But Lisbon knew that in the end, the "kids" would listen to her. The three agents with promising careers deserved more than to get filed away, stamped as 'Stupid enough to do something that just *had* to end their careers'.

Just when they had said their goodbyes and she was about to hang up, she heard a hesitant question from Grace: "Will we see you again?"

Lisbon bit her lip; hearing the fear and sorrow in her voice hurt. In the end, her honesty forced her to answer: "I don't know." Three simple words, but behind them was a decision that would change everything.

---

Jane left the bathroom shortly after Lisbon finished her phone call, indicating the bathroom was all hers. She was too lost in thought after the telephone conversation to think about taking her nightwear with her. She just entered the room, closed the door, stripped down and stepped into the shower cubicle.

The hot water running over her tense body was the most pleasant feeling she was able to imagine at this moment. She stood there for several minutes, savoring the feeling of hundreds and thousands of droplets pearling over her skin; the smooth particles were a complete contrast to the desert's sand that seemed to be everywhere on her body. It took her around half an hour to finally be ready to lose the feeling of the water on her skin. She could have fallen asleep standing in the shower; the feeling was incredible, just wonderful.

Lisbon realized what she had forgotten as soon as she stepped out of the shower. No clothes. Great. So that meant she had to walk into the main room wearing only a bath towel that covered her from... her breasts to the middle of her thighs. Great, just great.

She was relieved to find the main room almost dark, except for the moonlight shining into the room and the light of a single bedside lamp, when she exited the bathroom. Jane was standing on the other side of the bed, looking out of the window. He was only wearing his pajama bottoms; his upper body was bare and his muscular back glowed in the dim light. He stood unmoving, like a statue; Lisbon wasn't even sure if he was breathing. Forgetting her intention to get her clothes and quickly return to the bathroom, she silently approached him, coming to stand a step away from him.

Their gazes met through the reflection in the window. He looked darker in many ways - the usual smile was gone without a trace; the moonlight danced across his features, and the shadows played with them. His hair seemed to have lost its angelic blond hue. His eyes showed a clear determination.

"There's no way back now," Lisbon said, her eyes holding his. It was more a declarative statement than a question, although she wanted it to be a question, still hoping that he would give up on what she still believed was a suicide mission.

"I know," he answered simply, fulfilling her fears. The dark-haired woman sighed and laid a hand on his shoulder. She was about to say something else, when suddenly, he covered her hand with his and turned around so he was facing her. Every possible word was silenced when she saw the expression in his eyes.

There was a fire in them that nearly scared her - she had never expected to see something like it in his eyes. At least not *that* kind of fire - one caused by nothing more than longing.

Suddenly Lisbon felt small and helpless, wrapped only in a towel; she felt like prey that was at the mercy of its hunter. She wasn't prepared for feeling like this in Patrick Jane's presence; how could she when she had always only seen the charming gentleman in him. She couldn't decide whether she liked it or not; it was a feeling she had never thought she would have to deal with.

For a while, he simply studied her - and at some point, she closed her eyes for she couldn't stand his eyes anymore, the intense gaze that she thought would burn her.

All she felt now was the cool air against her damp body, a few droplets that dripped from the ends of her hair and onto her shoulder, the soft cotton of her towel against her skin, and the rough fibers of the carpet beneath her feet. There was also his hot skin surrounding the hand she still had on his shoulder.

Lisbon heard Jane's breathing, steady and calm and strong; she heard the outside noises, some people chatting, some cars passing, someone laughing, even some chirping crickets. She heard the ticking of the clock on her nightstand. But she also *heard* silence - the deafening silence between her and Jane.

She wanted him to say something. Or do something. She wanted him to end the silence - because she couldn't. Even if she had tried, no words could have left her lips.

And then she felt and smelled and heard him move closer. Her heart was beating so rapidly that she thought it would jump out of her chest; finally she found the courage to open her eyes again. The dim light left his face covered by a mask of shadows; all she could make out were his darkened green eyes.

The moment he closed the short distance between them and his lips touched hers, her mind went blank. She forgot where they were, whom she was with; she forgot to breathe. She only remembered one thing she needed to do - *feel*.

And so she felt. After her hand had slipped from his shoulder, their lips were the only part of their bodies that were touching. It was a warm, soft, and pulsating feeling that rushed through her whole body; it made her light, it made her weak, it made her want to fall and to be caught.

His tongue invaded her mouth when the kiss became more passionate and suddenly, she crushed her body against his, with the desperate need to feel more of him. His arms immediately enclosed her small form, one hand around her waist, one around her shoulders. And the feel of his hand on the bare skin of her shoulder

made her legs lose all their strength. He caught her, picked her up – his mouth never leaving hers – and laid her down on the bed.

Lying half above her, his arms still wrapped around her, Patrick deepened the kiss even more, taking Teresa's breath away. Senseless and yet with her senses more alive than ever, she pushed herself up against him while she pulled him down and onto her at the same time. While his hands began to wander over her, he heeded her unspoken request and pressed his body down into hers, causing Lisbon to break their kiss with a gasp of excitement. It was only a matter of time before her towel was gone, thrown aside by these hands of his that seemed to be everywhere and touching every nerve ending, every part of her skin. His mouth had come back to hers, obviously never getting enough of her taste, of the feeling of their lips against each other and their tongues dueling, no matter how breathless it left them.

Finally finding the strength to move again, Teresa buried her fingers in his soft curls, and rolled them both around so that she was lying on top of him, and ended the kiss for a moment to look at him. His eyes mirrored hers – dark with passion and full of longing.

There was a moment of complete calm between them, like the calm before the storm. Seconds that felt like minutes passed; then she crushed her mouth against his and kissed him hard, with all the need she felt.

They didn't know when his pajama bottoms were discarded, but they both knew they would never forget how it felt when their bodies fully met, bare skin on bare skin. They explored each other hurriedly, too aroused and driven by their desire, their hunger for each other, to take their time. It was a battle, a fight for power and for release. His hands wandered down to rest on her hipbones and caress the sensitive skin with his fingertips and she moaned in excitement, but the movement of Teresa's hips told Patrick that it was not yet where she really needed his touch. Slowly he worked one hand to her center, and again she ended their kiss with a gasp. She closed her eyes tightly at the sensation she was expecting when his fingers neared the bundle of nerves where she needed his touch so desperately.

He used the opportunity to roll over so she was again lying beneath him and began to kiss her face and down to her breasts while he tested her, pushing two fingers into her. She shrieked and met his hand with her hips, not knowing what to feel first. There was the sensation of his hot kisses, and there was also the stimulation by his hand that was slowly driving her over the edge. But Patrick wasn't about to let her come now. He needed to feel it, too - and he wanted to feel it with her. Teresa groaned at the loss when he pulled back his hand, bringing both his hands up to again caress her delicate, seemingly fragile body, as naked and beautiful as she was.

Suddenly, his hands came to cup her face, framing it and waiting for her to open her eyes. She did when she realized that he had stopped his every movement. Despite their lust and the unspoken agreement which had brought them to this point, Patrick's eyes nevertheless asked for permission. Inside the raging storm around them, there was once more a moment of silence and calmness when they just looked at each other. There was no rational thought left inside their heads, and they both barely acknowledged this fact. Yet the other's eyes told them so much, showed so many emotions, that they both shivered.

But the moment, as intense as it was, was over fast - and Teresa wasn't willing to wait any longer. She wrapped her legs around Patrick's hips, opening herself up to him, and finally, he sunk into her. There was no time for savoring the feeling of being one as their passion took over and made them move together and against each other, meeting each others thrusts, their rhythm becoming more and more frantic.

Though they were both breathing heavily, Patrick brought down his lips to Teresa's again. The kiss started passionately, but this time ended rather softly; his lips caressed her face when she panted and sighed and came closer to reaching her climax, as did he.

They made love like they believed the world was going to end in the morning.

Nearing the edge, Patrick thrust harder into Teresa and reached down to stimulate her with his hand, making her come and then letting her take him with her.

Her orgasm made her tumble, made her head whirl and her vision cloud. Her fingers dug into his back and a very satisfied expression appeared on her face, although no sound left her open mouth besides one whispered word: *Pat*. Her whole body was shaking, as was his when he lay down beside her and pulled her close. She hooked one leg around his and wrapped her arms around him, her head coming to rest on his chest.

Exhausted, Teresa fell asleep immediately, and even Patrick found some rest after he had pulled up the sheets to cover them.

*And just for this moment // As long as you're mine // I've lost all resistance // And crossed some borderline //  
And if it turns out // It's over too fast // I'll make ev'ry last moment last // As long as you're mine*

---

#### Chapter 4

The morning sun woke them with warm beams shining through the window, belying the event that was about to come, an event that was going to be everything but warm and shining. All the stress of the past day, physical and emotional, had caused them both to sleep so deeply it was already half past nine when they woke up.

They were still lying as they had fallen asleep, with their naked bodies wrapped around each other and covered by a blanket, Patrick holding Teresa close and safe to him. Her head rested on his chest, right above his heart. They both opened their eyes at the same moment, yet didn't move, thinking the other was still asleep.

Hearing and feeling his heartbeat was soothing and calming - but it also reminded Teresa of her fears, that she could lose him forever. Last night had been special, in more than one way. It had felt like the beginning of something, but also the end - like a desperate goodbye. She had been working with him for years now and sometimes had imagined what it would be like to be with him; to wake up beside him, to be allowed to touch him. Patrick had become some fantasy; he flirted with her and teased her, yet never really came close to her. It had been like playing with fire, always walking on the edge, but never crossing the line. The tension between them had been increased with every look, every touch, every personal word they had shared, and there had been times she had thought that it would become unbearable, but never had she given in. Maybe because she had feared rejection. Or she had just known that he hadn't been ready for a change, for taking the next step. She liked him, maybe even more than that, but had been scared to admit it to herself, because then it would become reality - that she was slowly, imperceptibly falling in love with him. But now that they had crossed the line, shoving the thought aside, ignoring it for the sake of her heart's and soul's health, was nearly impossible. An ice cold shiver ran down her spine at the thought that what maybe had just begun could soon be over.

Patrick could tell what Teresa was thinking - it mirrored his own thoughts to some extent. With his one arm around her upper body and his hand resting just below her breast, he felt her heartbeat against his fingers; felt in some way what she was hearing. And he also felt her shiver. Automatically, he pulled her closer to keep her warm. He wanted her to be comfortable and safe - a need he had felt since he had first met her. He had to take care of her. And guilt washed over him when he thought about what he had done last night, and that this had been something that probably could break her heart. Because in the end, he had slept with her to forget, and to just *feel alive* for one night; his last night maybe. He had used her and not thought about her needs or feelings. And he hated himself for it because she had come to mean so much to him. He knew she deserved better, much better. He had once promised himself - and his family - that, when all this was over, when he had found Red John and was still alive after the encounter, he would go on with his life. And Patrick already knew it would include laying the world at Teresa's feet. He had wanted to do it right, to show her how much she was worth, how much she meant to him, but instead he had done what he had never wanted to do - he had acted on pure physical longing. After the death of his wife and daughter, murdered because of his own foolish arrogance, he had thought that he would never be able to feel for a woman, for anyone, what he now felt for Teresa. He couldn't exactly define the feeling, but he knew that his heart told him to never ever let her go again - or leave her. And now he had possibly destroyed everything.

"Tess?" he whispered, the short form of her name coming out like it was the most normal thing in the world. "Are you awake?" He let his hand that was lying on her hip stroke her leisurely.

"Mm-hm," was her only response, and although he didn't really feel like smiling, he couldn't help to do so before he kissed her hair. "Pat?" she then added and he was surprised to hear her using the short form of his name, too; he remembered that she had done it the night before, but hadn't expected to hear it from her again. She didn't wait for his answer, but continued: "Please don't tell me we have to talk, or that you feel guilty," she lifted her head to look him into his eyes, "because I have no regrets, and you shouldn't have them either."

There were so many things he wanted to say to her at this moment. She had learned much about him in all those years, and it appeared she had also learned to read his thoughts. Maybe to think like him. Of course she would know of his doubts and fears; that he thought he had done something wrong. But he couldn't get through all the thoughts that were occupying his mind, the thoughts about how to tell her what he was thinking and feeling at that moment.

In the end, he just nodded and pulled her down into an embrace.

They were interrupted when his cell phone vibrated - a demanding sound fraught with meaning.

"It's gonna start," Patrick said, his voice shaking, and took his phone from the nightstand. It was indeed a text from Red John.

**At noon we will finally meet. Follow the coordinates to the Arena of Justice.**

GPS coordinates followed the message, telling them exactly where they had to go.

---

They were both dressed and ready to go half an hour later. But when Jane wanted to leave the motel room, Lisbon stopped him. He looked at her questioningly; to his mind, everything concerning their upcoming actions was clear.

"Do you really want to play along? This is a stupid game, Patrick. I could simply arrest him and..." she again tried to stop him - just one last attempt because she secretly hoped that last night had changed more than just their relationship. She was silenced by his finger on her lips.

"He'll probably be prepared for that and either kill himself or both of us before we will be able to realize it. He's a serial killer who has been up to mischief for so many years now. The police have never even come close to catching him because he is always a step ahead. It will either end here, or never. And it will be ended by my hands."

"This is far too dangerous, Pat. You don't know what to expect; you may run into your own death. And we won't be able to realize it in time."

"I know. But who cares? I..."

"I care. This isn't just about you anymore."

This made Jane close his mouth when he had already opened it to respond without really listening to her at first. Lisbon was telling him in her own way how much he meant to her, and that she didn't want to lose him. Admittedly, he felt the same. But at the moment, his need to end this was stronger - no matter how much she meant to him. He pulled her into a tight embrace and buried his face in her neck, deeply inhaling her scent, the mixture of cinnamon and cherry, the sweet yet spicy fragrance that suited her so well.

"This is what I've been waiting to do for twelve years," he said in a low voice against her hair. "This is what I owe myself, my wife, my little daughter, and so many other people who have been killed, before and afterwards, due to my arrogance. It is *what I am prepared for*." He pulled back a bit and looked her into her eyes.

And she realized, looking into Patrick's eyes, that his heart was talking to her. He had probably never been more honest with her than he was being now. This wasn't just about vengeance. It was also about his peace of mind, of him getting rid of his nightmares, finally being able to sleep again, to sleep every night peacefully. It was about changing everything. For herself, she had already decided earlier that it didn't matter anymore that there were regulations, that she was a CBI Agent with liabilities, that there was an official path she had to follow.

Lisbon had always thought that, whenever this day came, she would do everything to try and stop Jane. At some time she had been willing to hurt, even kill him, to stop him when it came to Red John and his desire for revenge. But not anymore. And she suddenly understood the meaning behind her own decision. She would always protect Patrick Jane, whether in the field or even in court. She would always stop him from doing stupid things as long as it was about their 'normal cases'. She would always have a watchful eye on him during those times. But this wasn't a normal case. This was so much more.

Her hands were shaking when she framed his face with them and her thumbs caressed his cheeks. She kissed him gently and let him deepen the kiss for a moment before she pulled back and looked at him seriously.

"I'm afraid," she admitted, resting her forehead against his, "afraid for you."

"You don't need to be," he replied, kissing her forehead, "because this time, I will not let him win."

It sounded like a promise. And yet it sounded impossible. Deadly impossible.

---

They arrived at the "arena of justice" five minutes before noon. The sun was burning down on them, and the big meadow gave them no chance to hide from the beams save for a lone tree they dared not risk walking halfway across the meadow to stand beside.

The next five minutes passed terribly slowly. They attentively looked around, sure that they would spot the killer before he would come close - the area was endless, but flat and every part of it very well visible.

"Pat..."

"Please, Tess, you will not discourage me from..."

"Shush. I just wanted to tell you that I will be there for you, no matter what will happen. I... I just needed you to know that, to assure you that I mean it." He turned to her and cupped her face with his hand, his fingertips caressing her soft skin.

"Thank you. It is good to know," he told her honestly.

"I see you have brought me a gift. That is very generous of you." A deep and malicious voice that made them shudder was heard behind them. They looked at each other for a moment longer, understanding that it was going to start now. Then they both took a deep breath and turned around. Automatically Lisbon drew her gun.

"Tsk tsk, that is not very nice of you, my lady."

A brown-haired man with a slender, yet athletic, figure who was as tall as Jane wasn't exactly what they had expected Red John to be. But judging from his demeanor and the fact that he was completely dressed in red - a very expensive, yet a bit old-fashioned looking red suit - he was the killer the CBI consultant had been looking for for so long.

"I'm not your lady," the female agent hissed when she managed to collect her thoughts and focus them on the situation; she knew better than to respond, but the disgust she felt didn't leave her the opportunity to act rationally.

"Not yet. But don't worry, these are only formalities."

Anger and a reflex when the man took a step towards them made her pull the trigger - horror made her let the gun fall down. Because no shot was heard - there were no bullets in the magazine.

"Well, I believe someone wants it to be a fair game." The man bowed slightly, satisfaction visible on his face.

"Now, if you allow me to introduce myself - my name is Red John. Surely you have heard of me." Both Jane and Lisbon had to suppress the strong desire to punch the man's smug grin off of his face. Only the fact that Red John was drawing a sword from a sheath they hadn't noticed before held them back from doing so.

"Oh yes, you're quite famous. What an honor to meet such a famous man!" Jane instead commented, his voice dripping with sarcasm, while his eyes were trained on the sword Red John was holding in his hands like he was unsure what to do with it.

"As you are, Mr. Patrick Jane. Excuse me. Were. Nevertheless - it seems like we have something in common."

"I highly doubt that."

"I see you are not interested in small talk. Such a pity. I would have loved to exchange a few words with you; share experiences and knowledge. But if you do not want to... well, I can also start now."

Suddenly, he lifted the sword so it was pointing at Jane and Lisbon and in this way pushed them backwards and towards the nearby fence.

"Take out your handcuffs," he ordered Teresa, but she stood still.

"Please, Tess, don't play the hero," Jane told her quietly, his eyes never leaving Red John. He heard her groan beside him, and then the clattering of handcuffs.

"Your lovely colleague will cuff your hands behind your back and around one beam of the fence. Oh, and please - give me the key for the handcuffs. We do not want you to do anything stupid." Lucky for them they had hidden a spare key in the back pocket of Lisbon's jeans. And more lucky that Red John didn't even guess that there was a second key at all. They only hoped he wasn't so thorough that he would think to search her pockets for anything that would be able to open a lock.

When Patrick was done, raising his hands to prove it, their offender walked around them to check the cuffs himself and make sure that they were tightly closed. They both had to hold back a relieved sigh when he returned to stand again in front of them without checking anything else.

"Now you can follow me," Red John then told the other man and walked with him a few meters away from Teresa, but they were still close enough that she would be able to see and hear everything.

"I've only one question: Why? Why did all those people have to die? Why did you kill, why did you slaughter so many innocent children, men and women?" Jane asked after only a few minutes of them standing across from each other, each studying the other.

"Because I can," Red John simply answered and swung his sword demonstratively. Lisbon felt sick; never before had she heard so much indifference and self-complacency; her stomach turned at the sight of how he swung the sharp weapon - it must have been similar to the one that killed so many people, and this man had rigged them up and let them bleed, maybe let them feel the life flow from their body.

"That's your reason?" Suddenly, Lisbon noticed, Patrick sounded tired and sad. "That is your reason for taking away sons and daughters, wives and mothers, husbands and fathers?"

"Do not blame me for the men. It is not my fault that they always interfere when I help the women to ascend to my kingdom of heaven." He spoke like he was a mighty creature, a godlike person, a divine being, chosen to



decide who had to die and who was allowed to live just a bit longer. Jane wanted to snatch the sword from him and decapitate him, for he shouldn't be able to ever raise his voice again, not even in the hereafter; never again should he say those words full of contempt and irreverence.

"You nauseate me," Patrick spit out and his hands formed fists; it took all his willpower to not lunge at the man in front of him. It was an emotional roller coaster; one part of him willing to give up at a complete loss of inner strength, the other part willing to live out the rage and hate he had felt for so many years.

He didn't get the chance to let his head decide which emotion it wanted him to act on when he heard Red John speaking again.

"So are you ready for your final battle?"

---

## Chapter 5

*"So are you ready for your final battle?"*

Was there really an answer to that? In some way, Jane was ready. Of course - he had been for years. It didn't matter what was going to happen to him, as long as he fulfilled his self-imposed task to kill Red John.

"I am ready to kill you, yes."

"You are very self-confident. But are you sure that you really want to fight with me? That you want to try and conquer me?" the brown-haired man asked again, with a cold smirk on his face.

"What? Are you so afraid of me that you have to try to dissuade me from fighting with you by asking me the same question again and again?" Patrick shot back, his facial expression as cold as his offender's.

"I am not. Oh, by no means I am. I only wanted to prepare you that you will have to do it with this." He picked up a second sword that had been lying hidden in the high grass and threw it so it landed at Jane's feet.

Jane looked at him disgustedly. "You've got to be kidding me. You want me to fight against you with a sword?" He laughed bitterly. "You're crazier than I thought. So you want to die like your victims did?"

"I doubt that I will be the one who will lose his life in the end, but yes - I would not like to change my style for one low creature. Although the lucky people who had been honored by me allowing them to give their life to me had not received this honor by a sword. I just thought this," he turned his sword so it reflected the light of the sun, "was way more classy."

"Okay," Patrick said, trying to ignore the need to throw up at Red John's description of his victims. "If this is what you want - please. Who am I to deny a dying man his last wish?"

Lisbon frowned. What had happened to Jane? Everything he said sounded so not like him, it was all so ... strange. She feared what this was leading to. Obviously he wasn't himself anymore, but completely obsessed by his desire to take revenge.

"I will even leave out one part of my procedure." Red John took out a stun gun and threw it away. "I believe we are even now."

"I'm impressed. You don't want to fight with an unconscious man? Well, that really surprises me." The grin on Patrick's face was demon-like, and it scared Teresa. She so hoped that he still knew what he was doing - because she was starting to doubt it.

It began when both men raised their swords, holding them with both hands, into the air. The sunbeams were caught on the shining blades and dazzled Lisbon when they were shot in her direction. She had to withstand the strong wish of her mind to close her eyes when the swords rushed towards each other for the first time. No, she needed to see it, to help Patrick if necessary. She had already opened her handcuffs though she still held her hands behind her back while she leaned against the fence.

It was unspectacular at first; it didn't even seem like a real fight. But soon the constant clanging made every time the swords met became something that Teresa knew was going to haunt her dreams for some time, of that she was sure. It was hard to follow the movements at all; the men were good at what they were doing and Lisbon wondered when Jane had learned how to fight with a sword.

Though at the moment everything was going well - as well as a fight for life and death could go - the adrenaline still rushed through her body when she stood ready to interfere, to help Jane. She wanted to respect his wishes. This was his fight. This was what he had waited for all those years; what had made him an insomniac, plagued by nightmares if he even nodded off. Red John was the reason he had lived in a nightmare ever since the murder of his family. She knew she owed it to him to at least give him a chance. But her fear was as strong as her respect for him.

She hated herself for not having developed a plan that would give her the upper hand in a surprise attack. And even more she hated herself for not having checked her gun before; she still didn't know what the problem had been. Of course he wouldn't let her stand there, with her gun drawn, and wait for an opportunity to shoot him. And she probably wouldn't have done it anyway; the risk of hurting Jane would have been too great. They were twisting and turning, ducking and jumping, and the sword would have made shooting dangerous, too, for the bullet could have deflected off either of the blades.

She still tried to understand what exactly had happened. Seven years ago, when he had told her what he was planning to do as soon as he would find Red John, she had assured Jane that she would stop him, no matter what. And then... everything had changed.

There had been their conversation about trust. He had assured her that he wanted to let the decision about what was going to happen - what he, what they were going to do - to her. He had told her that he trusted her, that he would always be there for her and protect her. And she had come to understand that he was the one person she probably trusted most, though she didn't want to admit it.

Afterwards, there had been a friendship building up, together, with deep trust from both sides. They had grown closer with every case they worked on together, they solved together. They had also got closer by spending time with each other - at first eating out together, but later even cooking at her place, chatting and joking for hours about everything and anything. Teresa had believed that maybe something in him would change, that he would give up on his plans, but every once in a while Patrick had reminded her that he still had a task to fulfill. And slowly, she guessed, she had moved to his side, something in her deciding that she would never stop him, but only protect and support him.

And now, here they were.

Now she found herself standing only a few feet away from two men locked in a fight of life and death. And one of those two people was the man she cared about most in her life, who she maybe even loved. She watched him fight with and against his nemesis and didn't interfere or help him because she hoped that whatever was going to happen would bring the afflicted soul of his closure. And because she wanted to respect his will.

If only she could bring herself to believe that it was the right thing to do.

Turning her attention back to the fight, Lisbon realized that she, as lost in thoughts as she had been, had missed something. Red John was on his knees. Not that he was fighting less skillfully, but he was in a more awkward position. Unfortunately didn't it seem to hinder him.

Jane was fighting with all the power and strength he could come up with. He was ducking, he was striking, he was blocking Red John's hard blows. The red-dressed man was agile, continually coming up with new, swift moves that made it difficult for Patrick to see where the next blow would come from. He had only been able to force Red John to his knees; but although the killer was now significantly smaller in stature, he still had the upper hand in the fight. Though Jane knew how to fight with a sword, how to hold and handle it, even in his better position he barely managed to attack, but could only defend.

And suddenly, he missed a move of his opponent.

Patrick heard Teresa scream when he fell down, landing hard on the ground and coughing in pain. He side was hurting badly and the pain was about to blind him. But he knew that, should he give in now, it was going to be his death sentence, whether or not Teresa was standing there ready to distract Red John if necessary. He couldn't just give up, not now that he was so close to finally have this man pay for all the pain he had caused him and so many other people.

So when his assassin came close and raised his sword, holding it upright to stab him directly into his heart, to spear him and see him die as he had done with so many people before, Jane collected all his remaining strength and grabbed the sword that was lying beside him to lift it up and swing it into Red John's leg. He was barely able to roll aside before the other man slumped down, landing half on top of him.

Lisbon grabbed the beam of the fence behind her to hold herself back from interfering. Everything in her screamed to help Patrick; it would have been easy for her to attack the man dressed in red who was now lying on the ground, defenseless at least for the moment. Yet there was this voice that was constantly telling her '*He can do it*'. And she didn't know why, but she trusted this voice. Maybe because it sounded like Patrick. And maybe because she knew she could reach the men within the blink of an eye since her hands were free.

"Very clever, Jane." Red John laughed coldly and got up. He moaned in pain, but managed to get back onto his feet nonetheless. "Nice try. But now, if you allow, I would like to have your blood."

"I will not allow. Besides, what do you want with it? There's no wall around," the blond man responded, as much sarcasm as pain in his voice, before he regained his strength for a second time and sat up. Both his hand grabbed the hilt of his sword tightly and swung the weapon against Red John's, which was flying towards him in an attempt to behead him.

Next thing Jane knew was that the other man lifted the sword above his head, blade held so that it would chop him in two upon contact, so he thrust his weapon up, burying its tip in Red Johns stomach. But the brown-haired man pulled back before it could spear him. He did, however, thrust his sword into the ground and bent over it, panting in pain, and held tightly as to not fall down. His belly wound was not deep, but it was bleeding heavily, wetting his shirt quickly.

Patrick was still sitting on the ground, gasping and groaning, and risked turning his eyes away from Red John shortly to take a look at his wounds. His open jacket revealed his white dress shirt had a growing red spot, and at some point his left hand had obviously been cut a bit, just that he hadn't realized it.

Red John left Jane no opportunity to check his condition any further when he recovered from his moment of suffering. Again the sword swung into the direction of Jane's neck - *was this some kind of neck obsession?* - and the blond-haired man did the only thing that would save his life - the threw himself backwards so that he was lying flat on the ground. Too late he realized that his position - and situation - couldn't get much worse. It was some kind déjà vu he experienced when his antagonist raised his sword, its tip pointing into the direction of his heart.

Only this time, the outcome was a bit different. Suddenly, Red John lost his balance - caused by the pain and the loss of blood, Patrick guessed - and staggered. Mobilizing all the strength his body was able to give him, Jane got up, pulling the sword up beside him.

The sight of what happened next made Lisbon's blood run cold. When Patrick got up, Red John bent over in exact the same moment, and the sword her friend pulled up from the ground heavenwards to swing it over his head and strike his opponent on the back grazed the front of Red John's upper body. The sharp weapon left a gaping wound Teresa only glanced at quickly before she closed her eyes in horror.

Jane heard the thump when his enemy hit the ground, but couldn't identify the sound at first. Confused he turned around and realized that there had been some resistance when he had stood up and moved his sword. Now he knew what it had been.

With a deep frown he used his foot to hesitantly turn his offender around. It was shocking to see the man's torso cut open and Patrick shook badly when he let the sword fall down, only to then follow it and fall to his knees in shock, with a horror-stricken expression on his face. He stared in disbelief at the dead body surrounded by a sea of blood in front of him, and almost felt the still piercing gaze from the wide-opened, dark-brown eyes of a man who had just looked death into the face, unable to escape him.

Realizing that it was over, Lisbon quickly rushed to Jane's side, kneeled down beside him and pulled him into an embrace. Slowly he woke from the trance he had been in since the fight had started.

"Where did you learn how to fight with a sword?" Teresa asked after a few quiet moments.

"The carnival circuit I used to travel with my father. His family was one of showmen and his brother, my uncle, entertained people by fighting with a cousin of mine. He taught me. I had never expected I would need it one day," Patrick explained breathlessly. His whole body was shaking from the loss of blood and the fear now mixed with relief.

They sat there for a while, just holding each other, till Jane realized that Lisbon was crying.

"Hey," he said gently, "You okay?"

"I've thought about it so much in the past days. But it is only now that I've realized how close I came to losing you," she whispered and tightened the embrace, "I'm so happy you're alive."

"Me too," he responded, then pulled back and kissed her gently.

"Let's go home, okay? Let the police take care of him," she nodded into the direction of Red John's dead body, "they will inform the CBI." He only nodded and she helped him stand up and walk back to their car. They called the police from a pay phone and Lisbon sent the team a text, shortly informing them what had happened. It didn't matter if there were official channels and ways to do this; she didn't want to have anything to do with it and since she was, as far as her job was concerned, already "dead", she wasn't about to take the trouble of waiting for the police to answer their endless questions. They were going to have enough of that when they returned to Sacramento.

---

They stopped at the same motel for the night, front desk clerk Martha only smiling knowingly at them when she gave them their key, leaving Lisbon to wonder if she, too, was some kind of psychic.

But there were no such people as psychics, she reminded herself.

This time it was a comfortable silence between them as they settled in for the evening. They showered together, which led to nothing more physical; it was more time of comforting each other. Teresa took care of Patrick's wounds, cleaning and bandaging them - luckily they didn't seem to be very deep, although they had bled badly. Nevertheless she made Jane agree on seeing a doctor the next day when they would be back in Sacramento.

They almost immediately fell into a deep slumber once their heads hit the pillows; again their bodies were wrapped around each other, each feeling the warmth and nearness, the comfort of being together, knowing that nothing would ever part them again.

It was also the first night in years Patrick Jane spent sleeping peacefully through the night.

---

They didn't immediately drive to CBI headquarters when they returned the next day; instead they stopped at the cemetery Jane's family was buried. He had bought two roses, a red and a white one, on their way back, and holding the flowers in his hands, he walked to the graves of his wife and daughter.

Lisbon sat down near the entrance gates of the cemetery, until suddenly Jane turned around and beckoned her to follow him. She followed him then, always a few steps behind him, not really wanting to accompany him, as she thought it should be his private moment to visit their graves. She already felt like an intruder simply by being on the graveyard.

When Jane stopped in front of a huge tombstone, Lisbon again stayed a few meters away from him. The next thing she knew was that he was coming towards her, taking her hand and pulling her with him, laying an arm around her hips and pulling her close to his side.

The tombstone was as beautiful as an object that reminded of the dead could be. Anthracite colored, had it the names, birth dates and date of death of Jane's daughter and wife written in golden letters. Above these lines the simple words "Beloved Ones" could be read.

They stood there for several minutes, just looking at the grave, and Lisbon noticed that Jane was deep in thoughts. After a while he let go of her, but maintained contact by taking her hand and holding it fast in his when he laid down the roses on the grave. Then he turned around to face her.

"They will always have a place in my heart; I will always love them," he began with a low, but strong voice, although his eyes glistened with unshed tears. "I know that my wife would have wanted me to go on, as my daughter would have wanted me to be happy. And I *want* to be happy. I *want* to go on, to live a life - again. But..." He paused for a moment, looking deeply into her eyes that were full of expectation. "Only with you. You've taken possession of my heart, slowly and gently, and it took me a long time to realize it. Now I only hope that you will never let it free and give it back to me, because I feel that it is safe with you." He framed her face with his hands and she automatically placed her hands on his chest. Gently he kissed her, and she returned the kiss, but pulled away before he could deepen it. Crouching down in front of the grave, her fingertips touched the earth his family was lying beneath.

"I wish I had known them." She looked up at him to find him watching her questioningly. "I'm sure they are watching us right now and", she shortly glanced up into the sky before returning her gaze to the grave, "I want to assure them that I will take care of you." Lisbon stood up and took him into her arms. "I think I love you, Patrick Jane," she whispered against his lips, her voice barely audible as her words were carried away by the wind. But he didn't need to hear them as he already felt what she was saying.

In response, Patrick kissed her, pouring all the love he felt for her into the kiss. They both knew it would still take him time to confess his love for her openly, and Teresa accepted it. At the moment, the only thing that mattered was having him near - and feeling his love.

---

### Epilogue

She wasn't looking at him. No one of them was looking at him. He was angry, no, he was furious, and they all knew he had every right to be. He had often enough shielded them in the past, had connived their stretching of regulations. But this time they had crossed a line, and he wasn't able to excuse it anymore.

Virgil Minelli knew he didn't need to yell at the team; they knew what they had done wrong, whether it had been useful or not. Red John was dead, and many people possibly were very grateful for it. But that didn't change the fact that it had been the kiss of death for their careers. And he was angry that they had been so stupid to not come to him and tell him in the first place - and that he now lost a good team.

Now he had to transfer Agents Cho, Van Pelt and Rigsby to other units. He had to give them notice in their personal files. He had to suspend Lisbon, knowing that she wouldn't be allowed to return at any time. He had to fire Jane, the man who had solved more cases in the past years than the rest of the whole bureau.

The only thing he had been able to prevent was Lisbon and Jane getting arrested. Of course they still had to show up in court, but at least they didn't have to sit in a prison cell. They weren't allowed to leave the city, but Minelli had assured the authorities that they were reliable enough to follow this order. They had, after all, caught a serial killer and freed the country of this man who had not only been playing with the police for many years, but also murdered a great amount of people.

The five now former team members just nodded while Minelli talked, acknowledging his words silently and obediently, and after he had dismissed them, they left his office with hanging heads. They walked right into Lisbon's office to have some privacy.

"I'm sorry," Jane murmured, ready for the verbal abuses he expected, now that the four people he cared most about had lost their careers and jobs because of him.

"It's not your fault," Lisbon started, falling down into what wasn't her chair anymore now.

"It was our decision to help you. You didn't even want us to be involved in any way," Van Pelt continued the dark haired woman's words.

"We had known for years that this day will come," Rigsby added, laying a hand on Jane's shoulder.

"And how much worth is a job or a career when you know that you've let down a friend?" Cho finished and smiled.

"We all will go our way; we all will find something to do. And we will do it knowing that we have done something right, whether it was within regulations or not. Red John will never kill again - what else matters? We are a team; we are friends, whatever happens. We have each other and no one can take that from us - there's nothing that counts more." While she spoke, Lisbon got up and walked over to Jane. "You've showed us how to be more than just colleagues and I'm sure everyone in this room will agree when I say that it was the most worthy experience we could make." She smiled at him when she heard the other three murmur consent. "We are better people because of you, Pat," she silently added, giving him a short and gentle kiss on the lips.

They grinned at each other when their friends cheered.

"That was definitely worth it," Rigsby commented and the others laughed.

"Let's get something to eat, okay?" Cho looked expectantly at his friends and smiled pleased when they nodded. Rigsby took Van Pelt's hand and kissed her before he left the office with her, followed by Jane and Cho and then Lisbon, who closed her former office's door after she had taken one last look around. The team members grabbed their stuff from the bullpen, and like Lisbon in her office, they also said a silent goodbye to their surroundings. Then they all left, Cho leading the way with both couples hand in hand behind him.

When Minelli saw them walking by his office, and how happy they looked, he only shook his head. Silently, he wished them all the best; then he turned back to the paperwork on his desk. Those people had a lot more important things in their life than just work.

---

*Lonely lying on a table in the bullpen was Red John's dagger, the weapon that had stolen so many people's lives. The rays of the sun shining through the window were highlighting lines on the blade - lines belonging to an engraving.*

*It read "Salvation."*

END

*I know that it is highly unlikely that the dagger would just lie around. And maybe also that Minelli would let Jane leave the building after he has killed someone, whether it was premeditated murder or not - but do you really would have wanted him to get arrested? See, me neither ;)*

*Here's a little "soundtrack" for the story - songs that inspired me and/or I listened to while writing:*

*1) My Excellence - The End Of Days*

*2) Wicked OCR Broadway - As Long As You're Mine*

*3) Il Divo - Every time I Look At You*

*4) One Republic - All Fall Down (was originally a song suggested for Jen/Jethro of NCIS by VerityFrancesB)*

*5) Bon Jovi - Bed of Roses*

*6) Sting - Fragile*

*7) Evanescence - October*

*8) Bonus: Gloria Estefan - Not Giving You Up (as Pat/Tess theme)*