

Caught Red Handed

Kelsey was shocked awake by the cascade of water dumped over her head.

She spluttered a bit to get the liquid out of her mouth, then darted her eyes around to take in her unfamiliar surroundings. She tried to get out of the seat she was in, but found her hands behind her and tied to the back of the chair, keeping her tethered.

Cold water was seeping into her t-shirt, though she could barely feel it with her body seemingly going into shock.

“Wakey wakey kid.” The man’s voice and image were both a blur in her current state of mind.

Her brain was running a mile a minute, though 99% of the processes running were just panic. Time slowed. She thought about calling for help, but something about the concrete walls, lack of natural light, and number of intimidating people in the room, suggested it would be of no use.

Great, she was going to die down here.

Her palms were sweating despite the chill in her body, and she couldn’t stop bouncing her leg. Nervous ticks die hard it seemed, especially in life or death situations.

God she wished she trained more with Zach and Cat. Maybe then she would have fought them off before they captured her, or be able to fight her way out now.

The guy grabbed her face roughly to snap her attention back to him. “Hey, I’m speaking to you.”

She moved her mouth but wasn’t sure any sound came out. She always pictured herself confidently telling off her captors if she was ever kidnapped, but this decisively ruined all those dreams.

Clearly unsatisfied with her answer, he slapped her. Hard.

After the initial impact tapered off a bit, she was able to think a bit more clearly. At least some other words besides just “I’m going to die” on repeat.

The first helpful thought was PEMDAS.

Zach, Cat, and her created a lot of instructional acronyms in their spare time, in the small chance they might end up in a situation to need them. Zach was the mastermind behind most of them, so of course they all had some nerdy element. Cat and her had both groaned when hearing this particular one, but she'd hug him for it if she got out of this. Whatever "this" was.

The P in PEMDAS stood for "People". Who's in the room? She counted six bodies including the main guy in front of her. Or maybe seven. Good to know she couldn't rely on her brain to even do the most basic math in a crisis.

All of them were dressed in suits for some reason, as if they just left work from their office job. It registered that the guy in the back looked like someone she might have gone to college with. Her brain was for sure glitching.

Next in the acronym was E for...eel? Eyes?

She changed her mind. Instead of hugging Zach, she was going to drop kick him for creating a monster of a memorization tool. *These will be helpful in a pinch*, Zach's voice in her mind mocked her.

The man was trying to ask her questions, or maybe just repeating the same question, but she was zoned back out for it all. Which probably wasn't smart given he was basically in control of her life.

He went for a right hook this time, which hurt considerably more. It finally jostled her brain enough to allow her to focus on the man's gruff words.

"Where's Red Falcon?"

One month ago

She was going to die down here.

Kelsey missed the sun.

Movies and books really hyped up secret underground lairs too much. A few months here and she felt like she would soon become pale enough to see through.

She sneezed. The place also gathered dust like no other. Zach had been tasked with deep cleaning the whole place, but had been three weeks ago. She would do it herself, but was terrified of accidentally pressing a button when wiping down the command board, or damaging some *very* expensive equipment. She was sure she could get sued for that, and would need to sign her whole life away. And that probably wouldn't even pay for a single glove here.

So yes, she tried to touch as few things as possible.

Even though the place was incredibly spacious, probably the size of a good sized movie theater, she mostly kept to her desk area. It consisted of her computer setup, and various stationary items. Like what she might have at, you know, a regular desk job.

However, working with a superhero wasn't quite the normal career placement.

She had to sign like a million page NDA to just get an interview. It seemed highly suspicious, but honestly she was so desperate to have a job lined up after graduation that she didn't care. Some places required intensive background checks at that stage, so this was certainly a step up from that.

The door at the top of the stairs opened, and Kelsey could catch snippets of conversation even though they were on the other side of the room. Sound really carried in the place.

"...really think there's something going on there." Cat insisted.

"I'm not saying there isn't, but we know literally nothing." That was Zach, always the voice of reason.

"Right, which is why we *have* to go. To get information. That's what reconnaissance means, idiot. If we already know everything, there's no point."

They continued to argue until they reached Kelsey's desk, where Zach plopped down a plastic bag filled with take out boxes.

"Okay fine, but we're making a plan."

The glee was evident on Cat's face as she clapped in excitement. "Great." She started digging into the bag of food. "Takeout courtesy of Zach."

“Hey! You said you’d pay me back!”

“I’m paying your salary, so really you owe me.”

Zach grumbled and muttered something incomprehensible under his breath. Cat was unbothered as she split her chopsticks and shoved lo mein into her mouth. She pulled up a nearby chair to sit on as she addressed Kelsey. “So what were you up to today?”

She shrugged. “Logged some more stuff today, then studied.”

Kelsey’s job was definitely a non-traditional actuarial role. Since it was just the three of them, they each had their fair share of administrative duties. Her latest project was updating inventory. She had no idea what most of the things were, as there were a lot of miscellaneous gadgets that Zach and Cat made. It made the most sense to have Zach do it, but Cat liked to drag him on various missions. Both graduated top of their class with engineering degrees, and were always tinkering with something or another. It was a miracle nothing had exploded yet.

In the center of the far wall was their absolute pride and joy: Cat’s supersuit. Unfortunately, it didn’t get much use. Cat was very much a “small time” superhero, largely unknown.

Because of that, the job had a start-up vibe, where Kelsey basically just got to hang out with her coworkers turned friends all day, and brainstorm ideas that almost always led to nothing. She ended up doing a lot of research, from government regulations to current events involving superheroes and villains. It wasn’t what she expected for post-graduation, but she found the research incredibly interesting, so she wasn’t complaining. Besides the lack of sunlight, she was rather content with her cozy desk job for the foreseeable future.

However, a dangerous glint appeared in Cat’s eyes, and Kelsey had a feeling that was about to change.

“So...you have any plans tonight?”

Kelsey set herself at the bar. If she had to be in a club, she would need at least a couple of drinks to keep her sanity. Plus, being on the outskirts of the place gave a good observational vantage point. Zach and Cat could do recon within the crowd.

She had no idea what she was supposed to do. Her instructions were to “keep an eye out,” which couldn’t possibly be more vague.

In scanning the room, she accidentally made eye contact with a gorgeous woman dancing. Kelsey looked away as quickly as possible, hoping the other party didn’t notice.

The last thing she wanted was awkward conversation with a stranger when she was supposed to be doing her job. Though Cat made it pretty clear it would be quite low-key, more like an extracurricular event.

Unfortunately, the woman didn’t get the memo, and appeared beside her moments later. “Can I buy you a drink?” She extended a hand and introduced herself. “Jacqueline. Jack for short.”

Kelsey took it. “Um sure. And I’m Kelsey.”

Jack smiled and placed an order to the bartender. A rousing start. Great job, Kelsey.

Thankfully, the alcohol flowing through her body loosened her nerves, and their conversation began to go better than the first thirty seconds.

“Training to be actuary?” Jack said teasingly after Kelsey mentioned her career, “Aren’t you a bit out of your element?”

“Ha ha. We know how to have fun too.”

“Like solving math equations?”

“Yep exactly.” Kelsey tilted her head and furrowed her eyebrows. “Is this not the annual Mathematic Olympics?”

Jack laughed. “She’s got a sense of humor.”

Kelsey shrugged. “I think of a few jokes when I’m not calculating integrals for kicks.”

“Okay then.” Jack leaned closer, maintaining heavy eye contact. Kelsey could count the freckles on her cheeks. “What number am I thinking of?”

Kelsey wanted to retort that her question wasn't a math problem, but held it back to not ruin the moment. "Thirteen."

The corner of Jack's mouth quirked up. "Isn't that unlucky?"

"Didn't realize I needed luck for whatever game you're thinking of."

Jack smiled. "Fair. How likely am I to die in the next 13 years?"

Kelsey pretended to think about it. "Ninety percent."

"Seriously?"

"Oh my god, no. I have absolutely no idea. We use models for that stuff."

Jack leaned back against the bar. "That's too bad. I'd probably be able to take out a pretty nice insurance policy."

"I don't think that's how that works either." She replied, amused.

Jack shrugged. "So, Kelsey. Do you work in the superhero sector at all?"

Kelsey scoffed. "No way, that stuff's way too complicated for me." It was kind of a lie, but she didn't want to get into details and accidentally say something she wasn't supposed to.

The part about it being "too complicated" was true though; she wouldn't survive a month in the Bureau of Supers Management, or BSM, the government's sector for all things superheroes and villains. The actuary group was well known to practically only recruit geniuses. Turned out evaluating superhero related disaster insurance needed brains built for brilliance and innovation. BSM covered both insurance and intelligence work, like a FEMA mixed with CIA.

"Sure, dummy." Jack rolled her eyes with the statement. Kelsey might have been offended, but could tell it was purely fun banter. "I still need a calculator to calculate my tip amounts, so I think you're already doing better than me."

"Well, that's not really comparable."

Jack just smirked. "There's the no-fun actuary." Now it was Kelsey's turn to roll her eyes.

Suddenly, the lights and music went out. Kelsey figured the power must have died. It was silent for a moment before confusion set in with the crowd, and people began moving and talking.

Kelsey wasn't usually scared of the dark, but would definitely rather it be well-lit in a place she was unfamiliar with.

"Jack?" She whisper-shouted in a random direction. "Jack!"

No response. People were starting to shove around, so they likely got separated. She took out her phone to text Cat and Zach, but quickly noticed her messages weren't sending. She swore she had service when they first arrived.

Everyone else probably realized the same thing, and began to move as a mob to get outside. Kelsey got inevitably carried out with the crowd, and tried desperately to look for both Jack and her friends.

"Kels!"

She breathed a sigh of relief as she saw Cat and Zach making their way towards her. "You okay?" Zach asked.

"Yeah, you guys?"

"A little freaked out, but otherwise fine." Cat checked her phone. "Well, it looks like our phones are working again. Since I doubt we'll get any more info today, we might as well head home."

The ride back was mainly quiet, all of them stewing in their own thoughts, and not wanting to give away sensitive information to their driver. Cat complained a bit how little they learned, but that was about it.

Kelsey was mostly wondering about Jack. There was something mysterious and intriguing about her. She lamented that their time got cut short.

As Kelsey pulled out her keys from her jacket to unlock her apartment, a receipt fell out with it. She picked it up and was about to crumple it up before seeing a number scrawled across the slip. It was signed with a simple "J".

Maybe the night hadn't been a total bust.

“See, she wasn’t paying attention.”

Kelsey zoned back into the conversation. The words by themselves seemed accusatory, but Cat was grinning.

She shifted uncomfortably under their gazes. “What?”

Cat could barely contain herself. “I saw you hitting it off with miss leather jacket last night! Did you get her number?”

Kelsey instinctively reached for the slip of paper in her jacket.

“Oh my god, you did!”

“What? No, shut up. I was very diligently gathering information.”

“Sure, *gathering information*.” Cat made an exaggerated wink. “Zach and I were having fun too. It’s fine, no one’s mad. Unless you don’t call her back—”

Zach gave her a light jab.

“Hey, professionalism!” He chided.

Cat rubbed her arm where he hit her. “Ow, rude. I’m literally the boss but whatever.” She cleared her throat. “Fine, back to the original topic. Like I said, there’s no way it was a coincidence that the owner got busted the same night something big was rumored to happen.”

“Cat, your informants are sketchy at best. They probably just want the money you offer them.”

“I’m a genius, admit it.”

Zach sighed, knowing he wasn’t going to win this. “Your IQ is a thousand and your brain is bigger than Jupiter.”

She gave him a tight hug and sloppy kisses on the cheek, both of which he did not seem excited about. “Thank you kind sir!”

“Ugh, get off of me.”

“Your wish is my command.” She released him, and Zach rubbed his arms like they were in pain. “Now that the shop talk is done,” her attention was back on Kelsey. “Are you going to call her?”

Kelsey scrunched up her face. “Haven’t decided yet.”

“Well, if you don’t, I’m firing you.”

That earned her another punch from Zach.

“Ow!”

Kelsey bounced her leg. She was so nervous that she showed up to the coffee shop almost half an hour early. She ended up texting instead of calling Jack’s number, giving less room for error in fumbling her words. Both Cat and Zach proofread the one sentence message, meticulously discussing the implications of each word and punctuation.

Zach was much more helpful than Cat, as she just wanted to send “wyd” with a winking emoji. That idea was immediately vetoed.

“This seat taken?”

She looked up, brought out of her anxious musing. Jack was wearing a simple white tee tucked into ripped jeans, with a ponytail pulled through the back of a navy blue baseball cap. Kelsey’s eyes did an involuntary glance up and down.

“Yeah, actually,” She tried to play it cool despite the intense fluttering in her gut. “But I guess you’ll do.”

“Harsh.” Jack replied, grinning as she sat down. “I’ll try not to take offense to that.”

It started off a little awkward, starting with basic small talk, but the nerves slowly dissipated as they chatted more. Jack was pleasantly easy to talk to, even while sober.

Both of them noticeably skirted around the topic of their careers, though. Not that Kelsey minded; it made it easier to justify hiding what she did if Jack was also secretive.

When the coffee was done, neither of them wanted the day to end, so they decided to take a walk in the nearby park. It was one of the few places of greenery in the ever growing metropolitan.

Jack suddenly paused to look at her watch. Smart watches were all the rage these days, but Kelsey had never seen one like hers. It was surprisingly plain, but she wouldn't be surprised if it was deceptively super high tech, like old school spy devices.

Jack cursed under her breath.

Kelsey had stopped right beside her. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, I just have to go. Work thing came up."

Kelsey figured it could have been a tactic to get out of spending further time together, but she thought Jack looked regretful. "Oh, no problem, work is work."

Jack gave her a kiss on the cheek, so quick she might have imagined it. "You have my number." Her smile was both shy and sly. "Text me."

They tried to set up another time to get together, but Jack's job really was as demanding as she made it out to be. Jack ended up needing to cancel every time.

They still messaged frequently enough though, which led Kelsey to believe Jack was being genuine about being busy, rather than just blowing her off. She learned Jack had her contact name as "dummy", the name she had jokingly called Kelsey the night they met. That wasn't something you did for someone you never wanted to see again, right?

Honestly, it worked out though, as Kelsey wound up working late those days anyways, compiling information on a fresh fight that Red Falcon was in.

The local mystery vigilante was showing up more and more, for reasons unknown. In fact, most everything about her was just speculation. Even "Red Falcon" was a name given by the public,

named after the red bird insignia on the chest of her suit. She gave no interviews, unlike most current superheroes who loved getting their five minutes of fame.

Kelsey would be lying if she said she wasn't curious about Red Falcon. She was only human.

The Bureau of Supers Management was also incredibly interested, calling on the public to submit any information they had on her, and extensively combing through every single scene of her fights.

Kelsey made a detour after work one day to check out the aftermath of the latest brawl at Jackson Mall, and found it crawling with agents. One of them made eye contact with her and she gave a hopefully friendly wave, but quickly left. The brief interaction gave her unsettling chills. She made a mental note to stay out of their way from then on.

"Jack, I can't dance." Kelsey whined. "There's a reason I was sticking to the bar last time."

"Oh, Kels, come on, it's not that hard." Jack dragged her to the dance floor, and she begrudgingly let her.

Zach, Cat, and her decided to go back to the club after rumors continued to circulate about it being some sort of front for illegal activity. They came more prepared than last time, bringing mini walkie-talkies in case cell signals got cut again. Each of them also had a discrete tracker stuck behind their ear, a cool new invention of Zach's.

Cat insisted that Kelsey bring Jack as well, so that maybe she'd "finally make a move". She retorted that Jack probably wouldn't want to return to the scene of a crime. However, Jack had been surprisingly content with just that.

Excited even.

Also a surprise—there was no last minute cancellation.

"Here." They were now squarely in the middle of the dance floor. Jack began doing some simple side to side stepping with the beat, bopping her head along. "Easy!" She shouted over the music.

Kelsey started to mirror her, slowly letting go of her stiffness.

They got looser as time went on, vibing even more with the upbeat EDM playing.

It was actually kind of fun, Kelsey admitted. It had a way of expelling all the tension in her body, and she found herself grinning as she worked up a sweat. She was able to briefly forget everything else going on in her life, and really live in the moment.

And in this moment, she got to stare into Jack's eyes, which shone a joyfulness she was sure reflected in her own.

Jack's eyes were a piercing blue in natural light, but in the darkened room, they presented more navy. They still possessed the same look that made Kelsey feel so impossibly exposed. Like she was one second away to confessing anything and everything.

Kelsey's brain had magically shut off, as she let the sensations of the moment fill her mind, rather than her anxieties. She focused on the strong synth of the music, and how perfect Jack's eyelashes looked. And how there was a perfectly round freckle right next to the corner of Jack's mouth.

Not that she was looking at Jack's mouth.

As the song played on, they drifted even closer together, eventually becoming cheek to cheek. Kelsey was now able to wrap her entire forearms around Jack's waist.

The club music became a blur as they swayed together. Their heartbeats blended together with the pumping bass.

"This isn't so bad, yeah?" Jack murmured into her ear.

"Could be worse," Kelsey admitted. "The company certainly helps."

She could feel Jack smile against her neck.

Seconds later, the music and lights both died. Kelsey internally cursed. She was starting to think she was bad luck.

This time, it felt more like an annoyance than a cause for alarm. Those around her seemed to agree, as they were groaning and complaining rather than panicking. Plus, she felt slightly safer knowing Jack was within grasp.

Reluctantly, she loosened herself from Jack's hold to grab the walkie talkie in her right pocket, though moved her left hand to comfortingly hold Jack's hand.

"Hey, you guys good?" She spoke into her receiver.

Zach's voice came through. "Yeah wait there, we'll find you."

"Got it."

She placed the walkie talkie back into her pocket, and felt Jack's hand tense around hers. "Hey, it's okay," she reassured. "Nothing happened last time."

Famous last words, as she felt herself yanked away and knocked cold before she could even scream.

Which brought her to now, where she was tied to a chair in some random basement by some random men in suits. Awesome.

They left her alone after a while when they realized they weren't getting anything out of her. She was worried they were going to off her right then, but to her pleasant surprise, they didn't. For some reason, she still held value.

She really had no clue where Red Falcon was, but didn't know how to get that through their thick skulls. She knew the same as any other random person picked off the street. They seemed insistent on her being aware of Red Falcon's identity, but also gave no hints on who it would be. Which seemed weird. Maybe they just liked keeping their cards close to their chest.

Currently, without all the extra bodies in the room, she could more calmly observe her surroundings. However, there was little to see. The walls of the room were concrete, and a single metal table was to her right. On top of it sat the glass that had held the water splashed on her face.

She had an idea.

The probability of success was likely close to zero, but better than being here when the suits came back. She was guessing round two would be less forgiving. After remembering Zach's tracker on her, she thought about staying put and hoping for rescue, but didn't know if the range of the device extended to a deep basement with thick, stone walls.

She scootched herself sideways, chair and all, to the table. The screech of chair legs against the floor caused her to wince.

She finally got close enough to strain her hands against the ropes, and reach for the glass on the table. She extended as far as she could, but could only barely graze the glass.

Plan B.

She backed up in the chair quickly, knocking into the table and tipping over the glass. Squeezing her eyes shut, she braced herself for the shattering sound to come. Sure enough, seconds later, there was the crash, which felt louder than a jet engine in her quest for being discrete. Some commotion started behind the door on the other side of the floor.

"Frick." Kelsey muttered under her breath. The noise must have startled the suits. She toppled herself over, careful not to land too much on a pile of sharp glass. She winced as her arm hit the hard floor. She felt for the large shard she had eyed, and began sawing at the rope between her wrists as swiftly as possible. The shard also cut at her hand, but the adrenaline pumping in her body dulled the pain.

It seemed strange that no one came through the door yet. Not that she was complaining. However, the voices outside had only been escalating, so there were definitely people there. Something heavy slammed into the door, likely a body.

Okay, so there was a fight out there.

Since it was obviously someone the suits didn't get along with, she was hoping they'd help her get out.

The glass finally got through the rope just as suits burst through the door, escaping their attackers.

Well, it turned out their “attackers” was just one attacker. Red Falcon to be specific.

Kelsey got up from the ground and stood dumbstruck at the sight, as Red Falcon easily took on four guys at once.

“Hey!” One of the suits noticed her out of her restraints and charged. She miraculously dodged his grab and stomped down on his right knee, sending him to the ground in pain.

“Oh my god.” She stared down at him for a moment, in slight awe of what her body managed to do on instinct. Apparently she wasn’t as helpless as she originally thought.

“Kelsey!” Her head whipped to the direction of the fight. Did Red Falcon know her name?
“Run!”

There looked to only be one way out: the door which everyone had come in. She hesitated. Maybe she should help out here.

She might also just get in the way.

“Run, dummy!”

The decision seemed to be made for her. As she ran across the room, she snatched something off the ground that looked like a wallet. Maybe it’d give a clue to who these people were.

She ran like her life depended on it, because it did. She had no idea where she was heading, praying that all these hallways wouldn’t lead to an eventual dead end.

Miraculously, she emerged outside to an alleyway, and immediately collapsed on the wall, panting heavily. That last flight of stairs might have broken her.

She knew that she should keep moving in case anyone was chasing her, but her legs were no longer cooperating. The adrenaline must have been wearing off.

Kelsey sat down with her back against the wall and reached in her pocket for her phone before realizing that the suits obviously took it. The wallet she picked up earlier was in there though, so she opened that up. It wasn’t a wallet at all, but rather some sort of government badge, with a crest on the left flap and an ID card on the right. The crest looked familiar, though it wasn’t until she read the ID that it clicked.

“Mason Baker, Bureau of Supers Management...” She muttered under her breath. “Holy shit.”

It really shouldn't have surprised her that the government agency was involved in something sinister. The vibe at Jackson Mall was certainly suspicious.

However, it still didn't make sense why they were after *her* specifically. As far as Kelsey knew, she wasn't withholding some super sensitive government secret.

Red Falcon did know Kelsey's name though, which was definitely odd. Maybe the person behind the mask was the key to it all.

Kelsey thought back to the fight below, pulling whatever scraps of memory she could scrounge from the blur. Anything to hint at an identity.

She seemed average height, lean but also muscular, and definitely knew what she was doing. None of those traits were something she couldn't have found in a simple web search though. Then, she remembered what Red Falcon said as she was telling Kelsey to run.

Oh. *Oh*.

The door next to her burst open, breaking her out of her reverie. She instantly stood, taking a tense battle stance, but relaxed once she saw who it was.

Red Falcon turned and shoved some nearby rock into the bottom of the door, wedging it in place.

“That probably won't hold them for long, if at all.” She was out of breath. “You okay?”

The voice was slightly modulated, probably by some chip in her mask. Not enough to be robotic, but enough to sound generic. A casual listener probably wouldn't be able to tell the difference, but Kelsey had spent way too many nights watching videos on superhero tech instead of doing her homework.

Her procrastination was good for something.

“Yeah, thanks for your help, uh Red Falcon.” It felt weird to address her like that.

Red Falcon gave a small nod, seemingly amused. "Just Red is fine." She looked to notice something. "Hey, your hands..."

Kelsey had forgotten about the cuts from the broken glass. Whatever pain wasn't dulled by adrenaline just blended in with her general body ache.

"Oh, yeah." She was too tired to do anything about it now. She'd probably check herself into the ER later, but didn't want to deal with their questions at the moment.

Red stepped closer and pulled a small aerosol can from her tool belt.

"Hold out your arms. And hold still, this might sting."

She did what she was told, then gritted her teeth as the cold spray covered her skin.

"It'd be better if they were cleaned beforehand, but this should help seal up any cuts for now."

"You really come prepared, huh?"

Red looked like she was about to reply, when Kelsey heard someone calling her name in the distance. Moments later, Zach and Cat ran into the alley, with Cat in full superhero gear.

Cat immediately hurled a knife, which Red expertly dodged. Red made a motion to throw something of her own, when Kelsey reached out to stop her. "Wait! They're my friends."

She felt the tension in the air as the two parties sized each other up. She prepared herself to jump between them if they decided to be stupid and fight. Mostly, she watched Cat for any sudden movements. She could be unpredictable when she was riled up.

Kelsey sighed in relief when Cat relaxed her posture.

Her friends approached cautiously. "You good?" Cat asked, keeping her eyes trained on Red.

"Yeah, just a few scratches. Um, Red Falcon saved me, it's cool."

They didn't have time to converse as they heard and caught glimpse of some suits running past the alley.

Red took charge. "I have somewhere close I can take her to get fixed up. You two go after them."

Cat looked about to argue, but Kelsey interjected. "I'll be fine. Go chase down those narcs."

Her and Red spent the trip walking in silence.

A couple blocks later though darkened alleys, they arrived at what looked like an apartment building. Red hooked an arm around Kelsey's waist.

"Hang on tight." Kelsey barely had time to cling on with stinging hands before she was pulled three stories up by the grappling hook Red shot through an open window.

Red landed them smoothly inside, then let Kelsey go. Kelsey's poor heart was racing, which she convinced herself was from the quick trip up 40 feet. Definitely not from being pressed into Red's side.

"Have a seat." Red gestured to one of the dining table chairs.

She left the room, presumably to grab first aid supplies, and Kelsey sat down. She took the time to survey her surroundings. She tried not to stare too much, as Red was obviously quite private, but curiosity got the better of her. The overall cleanliness struck her, as if it wasn't even lived in. The place felt sterile, sort of like a hospital waiting room, though the blue and grey color scheme helped it feel more homey. With the lights off, the only illumination was from the streetlights outside.

Red returned with a damp towel and first aid kit. The towel was warm as Red tenderly wiped at the cuts on her arms and hands. The silence felt deafening, but Kelsey didn't have anything worthwhile to say. She wondered if the other woman could hear her pounding heartbeat.

Kelsey reveled in the light touches from both the cloth and Red's hand, which was keeping her arms steady as she cleaned up crusted blood and dirt. She watched in quiet reverence while Red worked, who had her eyes focused on the task.

After the wipe down, Kelsey received another dose of antibiotic spray, and then some gauze wrapped around her forearms.

“There.” Red said when she finished, her voice barely above a whisper. She finally made eye contact with Kelsey, and Kelsey swore there was some familiarity in the gaze. “You know, that was pretty gutsy, what you did with the glass. And when I say gutsy, I mean stupid.”

Kelsey shrugged as if she wasn’t terrified out of her mind when it happened. “Never said I was smart. Desperate times called for desperate measures.”

As they talked, Red was getting impossibly closer. She was now just millimeters away from Kelsey’s face. Kelsey was so completely captivated by Red’s eyes, which reflected just enough outside light to seem like her irises contained stars. She hazily felt her arms being pushed back, but that was greatly overpowered by the sensation of soft lips on hers.

Light. Life changing.

She closed her eyes, letting her other senses take over. Thank god Red’s mask didn’t extend to her mouth.

Much too soon, Red pulled away.

And Kelsey found her hands bound behind her for the second time that night.

“Sorry.” Red sounded sincerely apologetic as she backed up. “Don’t struggle too much or else your cuts might re-open.” She made her way back to the open window, as Kelsey pulled slightly on her restraints.

“Jack.” Kelsey blurted out, pleading. She didn’t want to pull this card before she was absolutely sure, but Kelsey was desperate to have her stay. To give any sort of explanation, not only of what appeared to be involvement in a government conspiracy, but of whatever was happening between them. Her mind was a mess of unanswered questions.

Red/Jack hesitated, and Kelsey thought for a second she might turn back.

“Your friends should be here soon.” She said softly, before jumping out the window.

Later, after Cat and Zach found and freed her (thanks to the tracking beacon), she discovered a slip in her back pocket. This time, it had an address, but still signed with the simple “J”. There was an additional note at the bottom.

Meet me here and I'll explain everything.