

Author's Notes: This in response to a challenge by Kristin. She wrote: "In 'All that Glitters,' Francine is discussing with Lee the night he spent with the two women in the sports car, but he corrects her with the limo, etc. Anyway, it might be interesting to see if anyone can come up with a story line about that night." The Francine/Lee conversation went like this:

*Francine: "Oh, my favorite one - you, Elisa and that little French ballerina. How did you ever manage all of that in the back of an Italian sports car?"*

*Lee: "Ha, ha. Ah, she was a violinist, it was a limo and it wasn't easy. I was in traction for a week. But, uh, that was then and this is now and, like you just said, things have changed."*

*Francine: "Ah, you know what they say about leopards and their spots?"*

*Lee: "I'm not a leopard."*

*Francine: "Well, maybe not, but I hear Elisa has a pretty mean set of claws. Be careful."*

Thanks to a\_bit\_dotty and Shawn for catching my mistakes and offering suggestions. "I get by with a little help from my friends."

## Three's Company?

### Part 1

Lee fought to open his eyes. They seemed to be glued shut. He rubbed them gently with his left hand, not understanding why it hurt so much to move. His head felt like it had been stuffed with cotton. Finally, his eyelids raised a fraction and, through narrow slits, he surveyed his surroundings. 'Where the heck am I?' he wondered. He shifted to try and get a better view of the room, wincing when his right arm refused to respond. Looking to his right, Lee saw that his arm was attached to something like a pulley above the bed. "What the...?" Twisting to get a better look, he felt a sharp pain in his left knee and he fell back against the pillows.

"Ah, Mr. Stetson. You're awake. Good, good."

Lee turned toward the sound of the voice and saw a short, balding man in a white coat smiling at him from the foot of the bed. He was holding some type of a clipboard. 'No, not a clipboard,' Lee corrected himself. 'That's a medical chart.' "Where am I?" Lee choked out. His throat felt like sandpaper. "What's going on?"

Dr. Sanders consulted the chart, nodded his head and hung the chart back on the end of the bed. "You are in the Agency's clinic in Milan."

"Clinic? What's wrong with me? How long have I been here?" Lee tried desperately to focus, but his head was swimming.

As Dr. Sanders moved to Lee's side, he explained, "Your right arm is broken and you severely damaged your left knee. It has been approximately," the doctor consulted his watch, "four hours since you were brought here." He removed the sheet and began examining Lee's knee, which looked like it had swollen to twice its normal size. "Please tell me if this hurts." The doctor pressed against Lee's knee.

"Damn! Yes, that hurts!" Lee pulled his knee from the doctor's grasp. "What the heck happened?"

"You had a small accident last night."

"Accident? I don't remember any accident."

"Perhaps 'accident' is not the right word." The doctor chuckled. He drew the sheet back over Lee's exposed leg. "Do you remember anything of last evening?"

Lee closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Last night...last night I attended the symphony and..." His eyes snapped open and he gave the doctor an almost panicked look. "Theresa. Did something happen to Theresa? I was supposed to be protecting her." Lee immediately attempted to sit up, forgetting his arm was attached to some contraption. "I need to find out if Theresa is all right."

Dr. Sanders quickly put his hands on Lee's chest and gently pushed him back onto the bed. "Please remain still. The traction for your arm is delicate and can only move a short distance. Relax, Mr. Stetson. Miss Valdega is perfectly fine," he said, laughing softly.

"Huh?" Lee was perplexed. The doctor seemed to be enjoying a private joke and darned if he didn't plan on finding out what it was. "What exactly is so funny?"

"I believe everything will become clear to you after the painkillers have worn off and you've had a little rest." Dr. Sanders checked the security of Lee's traction, made a notation on the chart and headed toward the door. "Why don't you just think on it? I've left orders that you are not to be disturbed." He left the room and closed the door.

"Relax. Think on it. Sure, easy for him to say." Lee threw his head back against the pillows and closed his eyes. "What happened last night that left me in this condition?"

## Part 2

Lee let his mind wander back to the symphony. His assignment was to protect Theresa Valdega, the guest solo violinist. Ms. Valdega had been receiving threatening phone calls, hinting at a possible kidnap attempt during her tour of Europe. It was likely such an attempt would be made in order to 'convince' her father, a prominent government official in Rome, to give up his highly successful crusade against the Mafia. Since Roberto Valdega had taken office, crime was at an all-time low, and a record number of criminals had been apprehended. Needless to say, the Mafia was not pleased. Mr. Valdega contacted the Agency to ensure his daughter's safety while on tour.

From the moment they met, it was obvious to Lee that Theresa was determined to seduce him. Lee certainly was not against having romantic adventures. Truthfully, he'd had more than his fair share. However, he had made it a policy to remain uninvolved with anyone he was protecting. He had seen other agents fall into that trap, and knew it only complicated matters. Romantic entanglements didn't mix well with Agency assignments.

Theresa slowly melted his resolve. When she looked up at him with her soft, black eyes, it was hard to keep a coherent thought in his head. Lee smiled as he pictured Theresa. She barely reached his chin, even when wearing high heels, but her vibrant personality somehow made her seem much taller. The form-fitting clothing she liked to wear definitely showed curves in all the right places. The word 'voluptuous' may have been invented to describe Theresa. Her thick, wavy, jet black hair hung to her waist. She had a wonderful sense of humor, and her laugh was infectious. The perfume she always wore was more than a little intoxicating. Whenever Lee caught a whiff of her scent, his senses reeled. As the daughter of a politician, Theresa learned at a young age how to be charming and gracious in any

circumstance. She could converse on a wide variety of subjects and was fluent in four languages. It was practically impossible not to be charmed by her. The entire package eventually became more than Lee could ignore. It wasn't long before Theresa and Lee became lovers.

Lee shook his head and reminded himself to concentrate on the matter at hand. 'Think, Lee! What happened last night?' he asked himself. He furrowed his brow and tried to recall the events of the previous day. Theresa had practiced for most of the morning. She ate a quick lunch with the tour promoter, then spent the afternoon being interviewed by the local press. Lee kept a watchful eye on her, but stayed well in the background, far away from the photographers and reporters. Theresa's father, in Milan on business, insisted that Theresa and Lee join him for dinner prior to the evening performance. After the meal, the threesome went directly to the concert hall. Theresa and Lee left Mr. Valdega chatting with acquaintances in the foyer and made their way backstage.

Lee suddenly felt like he was reliving everything from that moment on, because the memories were so vivid.

He almost walked right into Theresa when she abruptly stopped in front of him. "What is it? Is something wrong?" He put his hands on her shoulders and looked over her head to see what caused her to halt, but the dark stage curtains blocked out most of the light. Beyond Theresa, it was as black as night.

Theresa turned and placed her palms on Lee's chest. She tilted her head up to look at him and smiled seductively. "The only thing wrong is that we have had no time alone together all day." She moved her hands up Lee's body, stopping with one hand on each side of his face. Staring deep into his eyes, she ran her thumbs lightly over Lee's cheekbones. Never taking her eyes from his, Theresa slowly pulled his head down until their lips met.

Instinctively, Lee wrapped his arms around Theresa's waist, drawing her as close to him as possible. He slid his hands over her back, enjoying the feel of his palms against her hair where the tresses were trapped between his hands and her back.

Theresa ran her fingers lightly through Lee's hair as their tongues warred with each other. She moaned softly and murmured something in Italian against his lips that was too muffled for Lee to comprehend.

Lee began trailing soft kisses along Theresa's neck, working his way slowly to her right ear. A small noise caught Lee's attention. Without stopping his journey, he opened his eyes slightly. Three of the young girls hired to hand out concert programs were watching Theresa and him with great amusement. Noticing Lee had spotted them, one of the girls whispered something behind her hand to the other two, causing all three to erupt in giggles. Lee winked at them and, in one fluid motion, dipped Theresa almost to the floor. Theresa's gasp of surprise was stifled by a passionate kiss. As suddenly as he dropped her, Lee pulled Theresa upright and held her with her back against his chest, so she was facing the girls. "Theresa, take a bow for our most appreciative audience," he whispered in her ear.

Theresa quickly regained her composure. Not one to embarrass easily, she nodded at the girls and took a deep bow, grinning widely. As she rose, Theresa spoke to the young women. "Spero che abbiate goduto le prestazioni!"

"Si, si, Signorina Valdega!"

After taking another bow, Theresa motioned for them to go away. The girls disappeared into the blackness of the stage, their laughter floating in the air behind them.

With twinkling eyes, Theresa looked up at Lee and remarked, "I am always delighted to entertain my fans."

Lee kissed the tip of her nose. "Oh? How about delighting \*this\* fan?" He gave Theresa a sultry look that made her stomach do flip-flops. In a husky whisper, he added, "In private."

"My dressing room?"

"My thought exactly."

### **Part 3**

A knock on the door caught them by surprise. "Quindici minuti, Signorina Valdega!"

"Grazie!" Theresa called out, laughing at Lee who, upon trying to get up quickly, got his feet thoroughly tangled in her discarded skirt. "There is no need to hurry, il mio amore. I am the star attraction. They will wait for me all night, if I so desire."

Lee reached down and untangled himself. "Theresa, you are no diva. I know you will be on stage precisely when the conductor expects you."

"Oh, Lee." Theresa stood and wrapped her arms around Lee and placed her cheek on his chest. "I would gladly skip tonight's performance if I could persuade you to sneak away with me to a lovely romantic hideaway I know." She kissed his chest and lightly ran her hands up and down his back.

Lee closed his eyes and allowed himself a moment to enjoy the sensations Theresa's actions were causing. For a few seconds, he considered her suggestion, but rational thought prevailed. Gently, he grasped her arms just above the elbows and took a step backward. He needed to put some distance between them in order to think clearly. "As tempting as the offer is, you have a show to do."

Theresa made a small sound of protest and looked up at him, pouting. Before she could speak, Lee placed a finger on her lips.

"And I have a job to do. Part of that job is to make sure you get on stage, on time, unharmed."

Reluctantly, Theresa pulled away from Lee. "You are right," she sighed. "I will prepare now." She turned from him and reached for the black dress she would wear for her performance.

Lee dressed as he watched Theresa transform herself from the wild, uninhibited lover he knew she was into the calm, cool and reserved concert violinist she became before every concert. The plain black dress she donned was the exact opposite of Theresa's normal attire. She preferred colorful outfits that were eye-catching and exotic. Although the black dress was cut well, it was almost shapeless compared to the body-hugging clothing she wore off stage. Theresa brushed her long, silky hair and slowly twisted it to form a bun at the back of her head. Sitting at a small vanity with a large mirror, she applied heavy makeup that would show up well under the stage lights, but looked a bit garish up close.

Theresa watched Lee in the mirror as she applied her makeup. She saw him smile and shake his head. "What are you thinking, *il mio amore?*"

Their eyes met in the mirror and Lee walked over to stand behind Theresa's chair. Still holding her gaze with his, he said, "I was thinking that all of this..." he gestured to the array of foundation, mascara, eye shadows, lipsticks and other

assorted makeup items on the vanity, "is not needed for a natural beauty like you. I don't know why you bother with it."

"It is a nuisance, yes, but a necessary evil in my profession." She chose a shade of lipstick and opened the tube. She stared at it as she twisted the bottom of the tube to raise the lipstick above the rim. As she brought the tube to her mouth, she said, thoughtfully, "Sometimes, I feel as if it is another person who is on stage, not Theresa Valdega."

Lee's pulse quickened as he watched Theresa slowly paint her lips. 'Good Lord,' he thought, 'I never knew watching someone apply lipstick could be so... so... erotic.' He bent down and whispered in Theresa's ear. "Is it too late to change my mind about that romantic hideaway?"

A sharp rap on the door prevented Theresa from answering. "Uno minuti, Signorina Valdega!"

Theresa responded, "Si, si. Un momento, per favore!" She stood and laughingly said to Lee, "I believe that answers your question." She kissed him lightly on the cheek and took his arm, pulling him toward the door. "Remember, it is your job to get me on stage, on time and unharmed."

"Yeah, I remember."

Arm in arm, they walked to the side of the stage. Theresa's assistant handed her violin to her. With instrument in hand, she waited for the signal for her to make her entrance. As the last strains of the current piece played, Theresa got a faraway look in her eyes. Lee recognized it as the final preparation for her to become the 'other' Theresa Valdega. She blocked out all her surroundings, except for the music and the conductor. Her entrance signal came and Theresa walked regally to center stage.

Although Lee had watched her perform numerous times, he was always amazed at her talent. The music from her violin seemed to fill the hall. He had never been enthralled with classical music until he first stood in the wings listening to Theresa play. There was something about it that mesmerized him.

Thunderous applause signaled the end of Theresa's performance. She bowed gracefully and left the stage, accompanied by shouts of "Brava!" and "Encore!"

As Theresa approached him, Lee could see that she was glowing. "Magnifico, Signorina Valdega," Lee said, taking her hand in his and kissing her knuckles. "Will we be honored with an encore this evening?"

"Grazie, Lee. Of course there will be an encore." She tilted her head toward the crowd and listened to the clapping and shouting. "How could I refuse my fans?" Smiling widely, she shifted her hand to capture his and brought it to her lips. "I will do only one encore, however. There are other things I intend to do this evening," Theresa kissed Lee's hand again, "things meant to please only one particular fan." Before Lee could react, Theresa dropped his hand and glided back onto the stage.

If possible, her encore was even more inspired than the original program. Upon finishing, Theresa was rewarded with a standing ovation. As he watched her bowing and collecting all the flowers tossed on stage, Lee wondered if the crowd would allow her to leave after only one encore. He knew the standard catch phrase was 'Always leave them wanting more,' but the fans in Milan were persistent. Theresa might feel compelled to return to the stage again and again, and Lee was very interested in getting to those 'other things' Theresa had on her mind for the evening.

He needn't have worried. Theresa rushed off the stage and handed her violin to her assistant. They spoke in rapid Italian, much too fast for Lee to understand. When her assistant nodded and walked away carrying the violin, Lee knew the encores were indeed over and 'other things' were about to begin.

"Hurry, Lee." Theresa reached for Lee's hand. "We must go before they realize I am not returning to the stage."

Lee allowed Theresa to lead him to her dressing room. As soon as the door closed behind them, he pulled her against him and kissed her passionately.

Theresa clung to him as if her life depended on it. When the kiss ended, she was more than a little out of breath. "I see you are as anxious to begin our evening as I am," she joked.

"More," Lee responded, kissing her again as he undid the pins holding her hair in the bun. He wrapped his hands in her hair as it fell loose, enjoying the feel of the silky strands entwined in his fingers. He released her lips and trailed kisses to her



right ear. The rapid beating of Theresa's pulse and her labored breathing indicated she was quickly becoming aroused.

Theresa suddenly pulled away. "Not here. I must change. Meet me at the limousine."

"The limo? Why?"

Theresa smiled devilishly. "You will see. Just go to the car. I will meet you there."

"I don't think so, Theresa. I'm supposed to be protecting you. I can't do that from outside."

"Lee, I will be perfectly safe in my dressing room..." she pushed him out the door, "as long as \*you\* are in the car!" Laughing gleefully, she shut the door in Lee's stunned face.

"Women!" Lee muttered as he heard the lock turn in the door. "I will never figure out what makes them tick." Staring at the closed door, Lee decided he might as well play along to find out what Theresa had concocted. He quickly recruited the agent who was posing as one of the hall's security guards to stand at the door, making him swear on his grandmother's grave that he would personally escort Theresa to the limousine when she was ready to leave.

With one last threatening look at the guard, Lee made his way through the throng of people outside to the car.

#### **Part 4**

The tall blonde absentmindedly fanned herself with her program. Her escort was engrossed in a conversation about cigars with several other men, a subject that definitely held no interest for her. She scanned the crowd, hoping to spot any acquaintance willing to discuss anything other than tobacco. The sight of a very handsome man rushing down the marble steps caught her attention. 'Lee Stetson!' she exclaimed to herself, a calculating smile forming on her lips. 'I certainly owe Fate a prayer of gratitude this evening.' She tapped her escort's arm to get his attention. "Please excuse me. I must go have a word with an old friend." Her escort nodded distractedly and the woman made her way toward the limousine she had seen Lee disappear into a few moments earlier.

Lee sent the driver of the limousine, an Agency operative, to patrol the perimeter. With the car parked well away from the symphony crowds, and the driver occupied elsewhere, he and Theresa would be completely alone for the first time in days. He settled into the limousine to wait for Theresa. He spotted a slip of paper with his name on it attached to the bar. Smiling, he unfolded it and read the brief note. 'There is a bottle of champagne chilling in the cupboard under the bar. I hope you will find it to your liking.' It was signed 'T.' Lee chuckled. Theresa definitely knew what he liked. He checked his watch. It would probably be 15 minutes or so, more if the paparazzi spotted her, before she would be joining him. 'I may as well open the champagne,' he decided. In the cupboard, Lee found the champagne in a bucket of ice and two flutes. He set the glasses on the bar and proceeded to open the wine. The cork popped just as the door of the limo opened.

"How lovely! You know how much I adore champagne!" The woman said as she slid into the car and closed the door.

Lee turned quickly, a look of surprise on his face. "Elisa? What are you doing here?"

Elisa Danton slithered across the seat and pressed her leg against Lee's. She leaned forward and picked up one of the flutes. "Pour me a glass, darling. I'm parched."

"Elisa, answer my question. What are you doing here?"

"Attending the symphony, of course. What else would I be doing here?" Elisa took the bottle out of Lee's hands and filled her glass. After taking a sip, she licked her lips. "Mmm. You have excellent taste, as always."

"I didn't choose the..." Lee stopped when he suddenly remembered precisely \*who\* had selected the wine. He had to get Elisa out of the limo pronto! "Elisa, it's great to see you, but I'm working. You have to go."

Elisa laughed. "Go? Don't be silly. I just got here."

"Elisa, I'm not fooling. I'm on a case here, and you will ruin everything if you don't get out of here \*now\*."

"Share a glass of champagne with me, and then I'll go."

Lee closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Elisa was tenacious and always got what she wanted. If he agreed to one glass of champagne, he could get her out of the limo well before Theresa arrived. "All right. One glass and then you trot back to your playboy of the month, you understand me?"

Elisa smiled and her eyes glittered. She knew Lee well enough that he wouldn't refuse and, even though he was giving her his 'don't mess with me look,' she would have him right where she wanted him in no time. "Deal." She handed him the bottle and her now empty glass. "You pour and I'll just sit back and admire the view." Elisa reached across Lee and pressed a button, causing the limousine roof to slide open. She leaned back against the seat and looked at the stars. "Wonderful night, isn't it?"

"Yeah. Just great." Lee poured the sparkling liquid into Elisa's glass and handed it to her. "What brings you to Milan, anyway?"

"I'm following the sun. The weather has been horrid in Washington and it's marvelous here." She nodded at the other flute. "Aren't you going to join me?" Lee quickly filled the other glass and set the champagne bottle back in the ice bucket. "Besides," Elisa continued as she ran her hand along Lee's thigh, "all the handsome men appear to be in Italy at the moment."

'Great. Elisa is in man-eater mode and Theresa is going to be here any minute. Stetson, just how did you wind up in \*this\* mess?' Downing his glass in one gulp, Lee set the flute on the bar and put his hand over Elisa's to stop the movement. "There. I had a glass of champagne with you. Now it's time for you to leave." He tried to take Elisa's glass, but she held it out of his reach.

"I'm not finished yet. As a matter of fact, I believe I'll have another glass."

Elisa and Lee grabbed the bottle at the same time. Lee shook his head. "No way, Elisa. We had a deal."

She tried to wrest the bottle out of Lee's hand, but he was determined not to let her have it. With a deep sigh, Elisa said, "You win, Lee. I'll go."

"Good." He relaxed his grip on the bottle, which is precisely what Elisa expected. She gave a quick tug and yanked the bottle toward her, easily removing it from Lee's grasp. "Damn it, Elisa." When he reached for the bottle, Elisa stood. She stuck her head and shoulders out the car roof and held the bottle away from Lee.

"It's such a beautiful night. Come up here and join me for a toast."

Lee heard a commotion and looked toward the auditorium. A huge crowd was descending the steps and flashbulbs were popping everywhere. That could only mean one thing. 'Oh, no. Theresa.' Frantically, Lee grabbed Elisa's waist to pull her back into the car, but she wouldn't budge.

"Sorry, darling. If you want me, you'll have to come up here and get me."

"I don't have time for games, Elisa. Get back in the car!"

"Oh, so now you want me in the car. Which is it, 'Get out of here, Elisa.' or 'Get back in the car, Elisa.' You can't have it both ways." Elisa laughed gaily. "Then again, Stetson, you *can* have it both ways if you'd like!"

Through the tinted window, Lee watched Theresa pose for a few pictures then turn her back on the cameras. She spoke to the 'security guard' accompanying her and, after a brief exchange, the agent placed himself between the crowd and Theresa, allowing her to continue her journey to the car alone. She was already closing in fast. "Why me?" Lee moaned. Looking from Theresa to Elisa, he made a decision. If he could get Elisa *in* the car, at least he'd have a chance of getting her *out* of the car before Theresa saw her. He stood up and grabbed Elisa by the shoulders and attempted to push her down into the limo.

Elisa braced herself against the roof opening, preventing Lee from making any progress. When she leaned back, Lee lost his footing and fell into her. Elisa took full advantage of the opportunity and wrapped her arms around him. "I knew you'd come to your senses," she whispered before kissing him hard on the mouth.

Despite his best intentions, Lee leaned into Elisa, fully participating in the kiss. The blonde slid her free hand under Lee's jacket, tracing ever-widening circles against his back. Elisa's touch had the desired effect. Lee pulled her to him almost forcefully and deepened the kiss. In a matter of seconds, thoughts of Theresa were erased from Lee's mind.

A woman's scream of anger brought him quickly to his senses. "Lee Stetson, just what is going on here?" Theresa stood next to the limo with her hands on her hips glaring up at Lee and Elisa.

Even though there was very little light near the car, Lee could see that Theresa's eyes were flashing. "Theresa, I can explain." Lee tried to get away from Elisa, but she would have none of that. The more he struggled, the closer she pressed herself to him. "I was just trying to get the champagne away from her."

"Go away, little one. Can't you see Lee and I do not want to be interrupted?" Elisa managed to recapture Lee's mouth with hers.

Theresa opened the limo door and stepped inside the car. "Trying to get the champagne away from her? How did she \*get\* the champagne in the first place?" she demanded to know.

Elisa's laugh floated down to Theresa. "Why, Lee offered me a glass, of course. He knows champagne is my favorite beverage and it always gets me 'in the mood.'"

"That's enough!" yelled Theresa. Her eyes narrowed when she spotted the ice bucket. She picked it up and swung it with all her might at Elisa. At precisely that moment, Lee pushed Elisa to his right to shake her loose. The ice bucket, three quarters full of ice, smashed into his left knee with full force.

Lee lifted his leg, cursing at Theresa. "What the hell do you think you are doing?"

"Here, Lee. Have some champagne." Elisa handed the bottle to him. "It will make you forget about the pain."

"I don't want him to forget about the pain, you tramp!" Theresa shouted. She grabbed Elisa's legs and yanked. Elisa desperately tried to grab Lee to prevent her fall, but Theresa was stronger, and the blonde was pulled into the car. Lee hooked his right arm over the side of the sunroof to keep himself from falling on top of Elisa.

With fire in her eyes, Theresa pounced on Elisa, a steady stream of Italian pouring from her lips. Lee couldn't make out many of the words, but the ones he did know were definitely not words a lady should use. Elisa fought back, pulling Theresa's hair and clawing at her face. Lee adjusted his grip on the roof opening and ducked his head into the car to find a way to get back in without being ripped apart by the two women. He shifted out of the way as Theresa pushed Elisa against the door. Elisa braced herself on the door to get her balance. In doing so, she pushed the roof control button. The roof began to shut. The sound of the glass moving back into place could not be heard over the scuffle. It was too late by the time Lee

realized what was happening. With a sickening crunch, the sliding glass met his right arm, just above his elbow.

"Damn it!" Lee tried to reach the roof control with his foot, but he couldn't straighten his left leg. His knee had already started to swell. "Theresa! Elisa! Will you two stop and get me out of here?"

Neither woman appeared to hear him, as each was busy trying to rip the hair out of the others head. Aggravated, Lee let out a piercing whistle. The women stopped tearing at each other's hair and clothes and looked up at him. Their eyes widened as they realized Lee's arm was stuck in the roof. Both dived for the roof control. The glass began to slide open and Lee shifted a little to lower his arm into the car. He had moved a fraction of an inch when the glass stopped moving. A piece of his shirt was caught in the track. Before Lee could remove the obstruction, Theresa, thinking the control hadn't been pressed hard enough the first time, pushed the button again.

"No!" shouted Lee. All three winced as his arm was once again trapped by the glass. Through gritted teeth, Lee said, "Get away from the controls, Theresa."

"I am soooo sorry," Theresa moaned. "I thought it was stuck."

Lee glared at her, then turned his attention to Elisa. "Push the damn button, Elisa, and get me down from here."

Elisa nodded and set the glass in motion. Lee gingerly lowered his right arm through the window, supporting it with his left. Elisa stood on Lee's left and put her right arm around his waist, allowing him to lean against her as they eased onto the seat.

The pain in Lee's knee was becoming more noticeable by the second. Lee knew that the lack of pain in his arm meant broken bones.

"Lee..." Theresa began, moving from her position by the bar to sit on his right. "I really am sorry."

"You're sorry." Lee scoffed. "You're sorry? Sorry does me a fat lot of good, doesn't it? If you had just let me explain what Elisa was doing here, none of this would have happened!"

Theresa turned toward the window, tears forming in her eyes.

Elisa gave Lee a hard stare. "Lee, shouldn't you be concentrating on getting to a hospital and not on placing blame?"

The tic in Lee's cheek began to twitch, but he willed himself to remain calm. "Yeah, right. The address of the Agency clinic is in my wallet."

"We'll get you there."

Less than twenty minutes later, Lee was wheeled into an operating room and pumped up with painkillers so the doctor could work on his arm. The last thing he remembered was hearing the doctor say something about a compound fracture.

## **Part 5**

Lee opened his eyes and stared at the hospital ceiling. "For the love of Pete, I was put in traction thanks to Theresa and Elisa. If word of this ever gets back to D.C., I'll never hear the end of it." He started to laugh in spite of himself. "No wonder the doctor was so amused!"

"So, you have remembered the events of last night."

Lee started at the sound of Dr. Sander's voice. He swiveled his head and saw that the doctor was sitting in a chair next to the bed. "Oh, yeah. I remembered all right."

Dr. Sanders chuckled. "Of all the things I have seen during my time here, yours are the strangest injuries I have treated."

Lee laughed again. "You know something, Doc? These aren't even the strangest injuries I've received... in the line of duty, you understand."

"I would be interested to hear your stories while you are here. I am sure they are fascinating."

"That they are." Lee looked curiously at the doctor. "Is there some reason you're camped out in my room?"

Dr. Sanders smiled. "I have been guarding you from two very persistent ladies who are most anxious to see you. They refused to leave, not even to change their torn clothing, until they saw you. We finally gave them hospital attire to wear and allowed them to wait in the hall until you awoke. Are you ready for some visitors?"

"Could I have my gun first? I may need it."

The doctor shook his head. "No gun, but I will be right outside the door if you need me." He crossed to the door and opened it, beckoning to Lee's visitors. As the doctor stepped into the hallway, Lee heard him say, "Five minutes, ladies. The patient needs his rest." Dr. Sanders held the door open and allowed Theresa and Elisa to enter the room.

When Lee saw the women, he burst out laughing. Both of them had scratches all over their faces, necks and arms. Theresa had a large bruise on her cheek, and her hair was a mass of tangles. Elisa's hair looked like she had just rolled out of bed. The big surprise was the huge black eye she was sporting. Her left eye was almost completely swollen shut and her fair skin was already turning interesting shades of blue, green and purple.

"I think I may look the best of all of us!" Lee exclaimed. "Elisa, purple really isn't your color!" The look on Elisa's face sent Lee into gales of laughter once again and Theresa started to chuckle. Elisa couldn't help herself, and soon began to laugh, too.

Wiping tears from her face, Theresa said, "I can't wait to tell my father that the agent assigned to protect me was done in by an ice bucket and a car roof!"

"I'm sure Dr. Smyth will find the tale quite amusing, as well," Elisa noted.

Suddenly, Lee's sense of humor left him. "Now wait a minute. What happened stays right here in this room, you got that?"

Theresa and Elisa looked at each other and smiled. "Let's go, Theresa. The doctor said 'five minutes.'" The two headed for the door.

"Hold on, you two, I want you to promise you won't say anything." Lee struggled to sit up in bed, but his knee and the traction wouldn't let him move far.



As Theresa stepped into the hallway, she turned and winked at Lee. "Ciao, il mio amore."

"Theresa, wait a minute..."

Elisa raised an eyebrow at Lee and blew him a kiss. "Ta-ta, Lee. I will be sure to give Austin your regards." With that she was gone.

Lee slumped back on the bed and closed his eyes, only to open them a second later when he heard the door open.

"Oh, it's you."

"I've had warmer welcomes," Dr. Sanders said. "The ladies asked that I deliver this to you. They said you dropped it earlier and thought you might want it." He set a bag on the bed next to Lee. "I'll let you get some sleep now," the doctor said as he left the room.

Lee eyed the bag warily. He was puzzled about what he could have dropped. When he peered inside the paper sack, he began to laugh. He pulled out the champagne bottle and held it up in a mock toast. "Dom Perignon 1973. An excellent vintage."

**The End**