

D is for...

Time Frame: Fourth season, takes place within episode "NightCrawler"

Author's Notes: This story is in response to the ABC challenge on the smkfanfic mailing list.

The aroma emanating from the kitchen was enough to make Amanda's mouth water. The day had flown by, along with any thoughts of breaking for lunch. She'd subsisted on the soft-boiled egg her mother had made for her that morning and a package of stale peanut butter crackers she'd found in the glove compartment of Lee's 'vette. Her partner's invitation to a home-cooked dinner had been, simply, a gift from the gods.

The week had been incredibly busy and stressful, even by Agency standards. Lee was up to his ears, and, as his partner, Amanda was swamped in paperwork. Lee was heading up the A-Tac team and had made it his single-minded mission to capture Adi Birol and put an end to the terrorist threat of his group, Karbala. That the man had time and time again slipped through his fingers only made Scarecrow more focused on his task.

They'd had a close call at the airport today. Amanda shuddered, thinking about exactly how close it had been. Still, all had turned out well. Birol's associate had slipped through their fingers yet again, but they'd gained a step on the terrorist. He'd actually been there today; something that had never happened before. Soon it would be over, and, hopefully, the workload would allow them a bit more time alone together.

Amanda heard the clatter of pans and the slamming of the oven door. She finished setting the table and went back into the living room to finish her wine.

"Are you sure you don't need any help in there?" she offered, relaxing back into the plush sofa.

"No, Amanda, too many chefs spoil the broth...or in this case...the lasagna. Deep dish, made with my own secret sauce, fresh ground Andouille sausage and home-made pasta."

Just the description made her stomach growl in appreciation. She knew the meal would be, as were all of Chef Stetson's meals, fabulous. Now, if they could just move beyond the little disagreement they'd gotten into earlier, the evening would be perfect.

Possibly 'disagreement' was a bit harsh. Discussion, maybe. Debate, perhaps. Whichever word she chose to describe the event, it had put a tiny strain into the evening.

It had started with the movie. It had been her turn to choose, so she really didn't understand how it could have been her fault. Not that anyone was particularly at fault for the disagreement... er... discussion... ah... debate. She'd stopped by the video rental store on the way to Lee's apartment. As it was a Friday night, there wasn't much to choose from. All the newer releases had been scooped up already, so Amanda had spent a few moments searching through the classics section before choosing an old favorite.

What had he called it when she'd pulled it from the bag? A chick-flick. Yes, he'd made a face, rolled his eyes, and labeled it a 'chick-flick.' That hadn't annoyed her. Not really. It had been the snide, sarcastic little 'jokes' he'd peppered throughout the movie that she hadn't found the least bit funny. He'd been particularly obnoxious during the final scenes, smirking at her when she'd had to pull out a tissue as Cary Grant finally realized that Deborah Kerr was paralyzed. Okay, so no one in the cast was dismembered, blown-up or hideously mutilated. There was a car accident. Didn't that count for anything?

The ending credits had been witness to some rather heated remarks concerning men and their inability to connect with women on a sentimental level and had devolved into a discussion about the differences between men and women in general. While no voices had been raised, enough snippy comments had been exchanged to put a bit of a cloud over the evening. Lee had finally retired to the kitchen to check on dinner and Amanda had gone about setting the table.

Amanda wasn't really angry and she knew Lee wasn't either. It was just that, at times, this getting to know one another better was not an easy task. Just when she

thought she knew Lee right down to the tips of his toes he'd do something to surprise her. Most of the time the surprises were pleasant... Some were less so.

A muttered curse from the kitchen drew her attention. A few more cabinet doors slammed, followed by Lee's exit from the kitchen. He grabbed up his coat and keys and headed for the door.

"Amanda, I forgot the fresh parmesan cheese. I'm going to run to the corner market and get some. Be back in a minute."

She smiled after him. Okay, perhaps he wasn't always the perfect romantic hero she'd put up on that pedestal so long ago. Maybe at times he was just a guy, like any other guy. But he was the guy that loved her... the one that cooked her dinner and cared that there wasn't any fresh parmesan.

She rose from the couch and once again checked the table. Candles. Yes, that's what was missing. She noticed the two taper holders on the buffet, but both candles were well burned down. She rummaged through the buffet but couldn't find any others to replace them. Then she remembered his desk. Hadn't he pulled candles from there once when the electricity had gone out?

She rummaged through several areas, but couldn't find what she was looking for. Finally, she pulled open the bottom left drawer. She almost closed it again, for at first glance it seemed to be filled with miscellaneous items. His junk drawer, no doubt. The place where everything that didn't have a home lived. But then something caught her eye.

A small card with a small bit of writing on it. Amanda read the last line.

Pilgrim's Peach Puff.

Amanda pulled the card out and stared quizzically at it. It had been so long ago that she'd given him that card that had been hidden with the music box. When her Aunt Minnie had shipped the package back to her from Maine, she made sure to give him back the card, thinking he might need it for evidence. Funny that this particular card would now be in this drawer.

Tucking her long legs under the chair, she pulled the drawer out a bit further. She knew she shouldn't be snooping, that she was invading Lee's privacy. But she

couldn't stop herself. Her eye caught sight of something else odd. She looped her finger into it and pulled it out.

A plastic hospital bracelet.

The one she'd worn when she'd been admitted after being poisoned during the Quickie Chicky Snack Shack case. She shuddered, remembering how close a call that had been. Fortunately Lee had carried her out of harms way, finding out what drug she'd been given and thus allowing the paramedics to administer the antidote in time.

Amanda continued digging through the drawer. Looking over her shoulder guiltily, she felt something smooth and square under her fingertips. Something had been lodged under the hospital bracelet.

A black leather case.

Opening it she found a shield and an ID proclaiming her as an employee of the Marital Relations Department of the U.S. Census Department. The ID had saved both their lives that day and had helped to put David behind bars.

Pushing aside an old Bombers Booster button with the pin bent out and a red Marvelous Marvin button, she found a tattered piece of paper. Cautiously she pulled it from the drawer and unfolded the parchment.

A marriage license for Amanda King and Lee Stetsman.

She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling. The kiss they'd shared on that island had affected her more than she'd ever been able to admit. That Lee had kept the document after so long confirmed her suspicions that he, too, had felt something.... beyond just a cover kiss.

Closer to the front of the drawer, stuffed in rather haphazardly, were a few more papers. A theater program to Parisian Intrigue and a note that she'd left on his desk only a few days before.

There was also a cork from a bottle of Cristal champagne with the date March 13, 1986 and the initials A and L inscribed on it.

Her heart beat furiously in her chest and her eyes filled with tears as she held the cork tenderly in her hand. Their first real date. She remembered him ordering the very best champagne that the restaurant had and them toasting their new relationship.

A pang of guilt swept across her. Not an hour ago she'd accused him of being a typical male... unable to appreciate anything sentimental. Now, to find this... all these mementos of their work together, of their friendship, and now, of their love. Again, just when she thought she'd figured him out, he'd gone and surprised her. She'd underestimated him, and she vowed never to make that mistake again. She smiled softly, thinking that she could make it up to him by giving him a bit of a surprise for dessert.

Amanda was getting ready to close the drawer, worried that Lee might come back and catch her snooping, when she saw the end of a white ribbon peeking out. She looked over at the door, then back to the drawer. Taking a deep breath, she pulled the drawer out further.

Nestled amongst the memories and tidbits of their past together, was their future.

A small, square, blue box tied up with a white satin ribbon.

"Oh, my gosh," Amanda breathed, smiling.

The End