

Recovered Strength

Jane x Lisbon

Von Schneebume

Kapitel 11: Christmas Wish

Christmas Wish

(Secret Santa für den The Mentalist-Zirkel☐)

It was a Sunday in December, the last one before Christmas.

CBI consultant Patrick Jane was strolling towards the park. All his colleagues from Serious Crimes Unit were at home – or elsewhere. They weren't at work, that is. And for a change Jane himself wasn't in the mood to brood alone in the CBI attic. He liked his dusty place of refuge, dearly, but sometimes it felt like a cage.

Besides, it was a chilly but sunny day in California, absolutely meant for a decent walk.

Jane breathed the fresh air and roamed past some playing children. They were completely caught in their game, screaming and laughing. A little boy almost ran into him and called a breathless "Sorry!" over his shoulder before he rushed back to his friends.

Jane shook his head with a smile and was about to go on, when a sudden voice stopped him.

"Kids, huh?"

Turning around he found an old man sitting on a bench by the wayside. He had a cozy big belly, a fluffy white beard and his wrinkled face was framed with white curls. He wasn't the youngest anymore, undoubtedly, but his expression was vivid and his wise blue eyes gleamed impishly.

He obviously had been the one talking and judging by his eager look he had obviously addressed Jane with that.

"Yeah." Jane frowned and scrutinized him.

"Come on, son, sit by me." The old man patted the empty space next to him.

Jane wanted to refuse but the man smiled so warmly and friendly at him that Jane couldn't deny him that.

As he sat down, the old man introduced himself as Sanson.

"But feel free to call me San. Everybody does that," he added.

"Patrick." They shook hands.

"So, tell me, Patrick, what brings you here?"

Jane relaxed against the backrest and watched the playing kids.

"Well...I've nowhere else to be," he answered vaguely.

San eyed him from the side and uttered a musing sound.

"Hmm...I see."

They stayed silent for awhile until the silence was broken by San.

"Sounds like a good thing...not having to be anywhere."

Jane gave him one of his small fake smiles. "Not so sure about that."

San nodded thoughtfully.

"What about you?" Jane wanted to know politely.

San blinked. "Oh you know...Christmas is near."

Jane furrowed his brow in wonder. Not even he was able to tell what the other one meant with this cryptic reply.

San sensed the question in the air and turned to the consultant completely, giving him his full attention.

"Tell me, Patrick, do you have a wish for Christmas this year?"

"Uhm..." Jane was taken by surprise.

His need for revenge hardly was an appropriate Christmas wish and definitely the wrong thing to tell a stranger, so he answered evasively.

"Not yet."

"Then you better hurry, son." San slapped him firmly on the shoulder. "There isn't much time until Christmas anymore. And fulfilling a wish takes some time, you know."

"Excuse me?"

San waved his hand soothingly. "Don't worry, it's not too late, yet. " With a groan he pushed himself off the bench and muttered under his breath, "Holy sh...I'm getting old. Ah well."

He smiled fatherly at Jane. "You still have time to think about your wish, Patrick. Just let me know as soon as you find out."

"Why?" Jane couldn't help asking. This old man was kind of weird. Or just...old, and confused, even though he didn't seem to be.

San beamed at him like the afternoon sun and spread his arms. "Because that's what I'm here for."

He winked and started to move. "Goodbye, son." With that he strolled away, humming loudly *'We need a little Christmas'* and leaving a confused-looking consultant behind.

XxxChristmas Wishxxx

"Hey, Jane. ...Jane?"

"Hm? Oh hey, Lisbon."

Lisbon raised her brows as she eyed him meaningfully. It was Monday morning, the morning of Christmas Eve so to say, and her consultant had just come into her office, tea cup and saucer in his hands, and stood still in the middle of the room, obviously being deep in thoughts.

"Everything all right?"

"Yeah, sure...I just...I had a strange encounter yesterday." Still musing he sat down on her couch.

"Strange? How so?"

"Ah, I don't know. I guess it was just a strangely confused old man."

"You know, most of the people you piss off on a daily basis would describe *you* in the same way." Lisbon smirked.

Jane looked at her, eyebrow raised. "That's neither very nice nor true, Agent Lisbon."

"Whatever you say, Jane, whatever you say." She bit her lip to stifle her laughter. Her green eyes glimmered teasingly.

He couldn't help it, his lips twitched into a smile. To see her in such a relaxed and amused mood had been a rare thing lately. The past months had been tough on her.

Mostly because of him.

His smile faltered. A sudden feeling of guilt banged into his gut – and for once it wasn't because of his family's tragedy.

Lisbon saw how his expression abruptly turned serious.

"Jane?" There was only a hint of unease in her voice, as if she wondered whether she had offended him – even though she knew better.

He blinked and gathered the control over his mask.

"You wounded me, Lisbon, deeply!" He gripped his chest in mock sorrow.

She snorted.

"Poor baby. Has your big bad boss offended you?"

"Yes," he answered with a sad sigh.

She tried to stay serious but failed and chuckled. "Well, then, please tell me how I can make it up to you."

His eyes lit up immediately and he sprang to his feet to walk over to her.

"I've got the perfect idea, my dear!"

"Oh no..." She looked at him with pure horror.

"Nah, don't worry. You'll love this one, I promise. ...Would you stop looking at me like that?"

"Sorry, can't help myself. So what's this great idea of yours?"

"Around the corner a new ice rink has been opened a few days ago. So we're going to go ice skating, you and me."

"What? No way!"

"Don't be afraid, it'll be fun. And this way *the old man* can show you how fit he actually is."

"I'm not sure I'm willing to risk that. It's my job to protect you from physical harm."

Jane pouted. "You know, more insults are not making it up to me."

Lisbon bit her lip again. He could see she was considering it. Her inner turmoil was mirrored on her face. Jane was pretty sure, that she secretly loved to go ice skating. So he pushed just a little bit more.

"Well? Please, Lisbon? What could possibly spread more Christmas spirit than ice skating?"

"Do you want a list?"

"Come on! You don't have any other after work plans anyway. And this way both of us would be in nice company this evening."

They stared at each other for another minute until she huffed in resignation.

"Fine!"

He grinned triumphantly and returned to her couch to sink down on it with a satisfied moan, while Lisbon muttered some curses under her breath.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

They arrived at the ice rink in the late evening. Since it was Christmas Eve there weren't many people in the hall anymore.

Despite her earlier hesitation Lisbon had some difficulty to hide her excitement. During the whole day at work and after releasing her team into their well deserved holidays she had been looking forward to that. The truth was, while she was expecting her brother Tommy, his daughter Annie and Virgil Minelli for Christmas Day, Jane had been right about her plans for tonight. And eventually his idea had sounded much better than the few unspectacular ones she had thought of.

While Jane put some lent skates on Lisbon eyed her own critically.

"I haven't used them for years. I think they need to be sharpened."

Jane nodded towards the skate renting. "I'm pretty sure they can do it. You just have to ask nicely."

She rolled her eyes at him, but agreed though. "You go ahead. I'll meet you on the ice in a few minutes."

"Sure. I'll be the gracefully slipping one."

Lisbon looked at him as if to say '*Can't wait to see you trying*' and turned away.

When she reached the renting service no one was in sight. She leaned over the counter.

"Hello?"

There was a muffled sound and then a paunched old man with white hair and beard appeared in front of her. "Hello, young lady, how may I help you?" He smiled friendly

and revealed some perfect white teeth.

Lisbon was about to say something because of the form of address but then she just smiled back instead.

She explained her request and handed her skates over.

He took them and examined them through his half-moon glasses.

"Ah...I see. That won't be a problem, my dear. Good old San will have it done in no time."

"Thanks."

After sharpening the blades and returning the skates to her, he watched her putting them on.

"So Christmas is coming very soon, huh?"

Lisbon looked up and smiled. "Guess so."

"Do you have a Christmas wish, my dear?"

She blinked in confusion and eyed him with furrowed brows, biting her lower lip unconsciously.

San tilted his head, scrutinizing her, and then his smile brightened. "So you do have a wish for Christmas...but you're not ready to admit it yet."

In a comforting gesture he put his huge warm hand on top of hers. Lisbon looked down on their hands and back to his face. Under usual circumstances she would never allow a stranger to invade her personal space, but she simply couldn't help it. He was like the grandfather she never had, with the air of mystery and magic around him, and hypnotic blue eyes.

"Don't you worry, young lady, you'll get to that. Soon." San squeezed her hand softly and let go afterwards. With a last smile and a conspiratorial wink he waved and disappeared into the backroom.

"What the hell was that?" Lisbon wondered. Weird. It definitely was weird.

Shaking her head she walked towards the ice. When she stepped onto it and looked for her consultant, all the wonder vanished from her mind.

An unbelieving laugh escaped her throat as she caught sight of Jane.

With a smirk she slid towards the point where he all but gracefully stumbled on the frozen water.

She stopped next to him and pointed at his shaking legs. "That's the way you wanted to impress me, Jane?"

"Oh hey Lisbon." His smile was only slightly distraught while he clung to the boards. "Yeah...well, it's been a while, I guess. Ice skating obviously isn't as simple as I remembered it to be."

Lisbon grinned mischievously and just to rub it in she glided around the ice skillfully.

Jane raised an eyebrow when she came to a halt next to him again.

"Why, Lisbon, I'm impressed now. That looked pretty graceful to me. You're quite good at this."

She shrugged. "I taught my brothers how to skate. I had to be good."

"Well then" He let go of the boards and grabbed her shoulders instead. "You can help me not to fall on my behind."

Instinctively Lisbon reached out to steady him.

"Oh you mean, because I'm the one who saves your ass all the time anyway?" she asked dryly.

He grinned. "Exactly."

Lisbon rolled her eyes in mock annoyance, but tightened the grip around him nevertheless.

She took some powerful steps forward and pulled him with her. Jane shrieked in a very unmanly way and clung to her even more.

"Not so fast, Lisbon!"

"Oh boy, would you just relax?! I hold you."

He stayed quiet for a moment before he turned his head to hers.

"Yes, you do."

It was only then that she noticed how close they actually were. She glimpsed at him and felt a soft blush creeping over her cheeks.

"Concentrate on the task at hand, Jane."

"Sorry."

For awhile Lisbon led him safely across the ice.

Step by step he became better, his feet finally remembering how to do it. He felt safer and could walk freer with every move – as long as Lisbon was still holding at least one of his hands.

After half an hour Jane decided to take a break and give Lisbon the chance to skate as she pleased and without a clinging consultant.

She felt his eyes on her while she slid away, but she didn't care. They were the last ones on the ice now so she could totally enjoy the cool wind in her face, caused by her fast and precise movements.

"Do you know any jumps?" Jane called, when she passed by him backwards.

"I used to do Axels. Actually I managed the double Axel, but that was twenty years ago."

Jane waved reassuringly. "You're in top condition, Lisbon, I'm sure you can still do it."

She only hesitated for seconds, checking if they were indeed alone, and then she sped up, turned forwards and jumped.

Jane clapped his hands when she landed safely on her foot again. "See?! I knew it!"

"Yeah..." she replied a little out of breath, adrenalin pumping through her veins. "But that was just a simple Axel. I was too slow and not high enough." This time she didn't hesitate. "I want to try the double again."

She started again.

Lisbon didn't know that Jane was so fascinated by her actions that he made a few steps to get a better look. And she also didn't know that he suddenly wasn't able to stop himself on the ice just when she landed after a successfully completed double Axel.

It happened what had to happen due to Murphy's Law. They were the only ones on the huge frozen surface and yet they managed to collide. Lisbon had no chance but to crush into Jane with a surprised yell and both of them went to the ground, moaning painfully.

"What the hell, Jane?" she panted breathlessly. She had fallen on Jane and was currently partly lying on him and partly sitting between his legs.

"Sorry," he whined while he clung to her once more - even if for a different reason now, since his intention had been holding *her* this time. Not that he had succeeded, obviously. "My feet had been faster than my rational mind."

"Well, that's a first! Under usual circumstances your feet only are faster than your mind when you outrun a person you insulted."

"What can I say..."

"Do me a favor and say nothing at all," she retorted dryly and tried to push herself from his chest. "Give me your hands, Jane, I'll pull you up."

His hands slid from her arms so that he could do so and she climbed to her feet. However, when Jane put his blades on the ice his feet immediately slipped away and he slumped on his buttocks again, pulling her with him again.

"Ouch!"

"Seriously, Jane?" Lisbon shook her head but then paused when she saw Jane's terrified expression. She followed his look and understood what got him pale. Her knee had landed very close...between his thighs this time. That could have ended pretty badly.

There was silence for a moment. When their eyes met Lisbon felt *it* - the increasing prickling in her throat. She simply couldn't help it and started snorting with laughter.

"I'm glad my pain amuses you," Jane commented dryly but grinned nonetheless.

"I'm sorry," she replied between two chuckles. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, but this is getting really humiliating."

She burst out laughing again even though she tried to stifle it. This whole moment had been so hilarious and simply laughing hearty felt so good that she wasn't able to stop.

Jane watched her with a smile. The cold ice was wetting their clothes already but neither of them made another effort to get up.

"You should have seen your face!" Lisbon pressed through her teeth, shaking and almost crying with laughter.

She was so caught in the memory that she didn't notice Jane's hand until he put it softly on her cheek.

Lisbon looked at him and the laughter slowly died in her throat as he held her gaze. His palm was cold and yet it burned her skin. His eyes were as deep as always, but it was the first time she lost herself in them in an instant, suddenly feeling like falling in a very different way.

There was this look again. The same expression he had worn in her office earlier that day. It was so full of...regret? No, it was guilt. And something else. Something so deep and meaningful she almost couldn't bear it.

And all of a sudden she wondered if she was the reason for it.

"Jane?" she whispered a little helpless, his intense stare making her feel all exposed.

Instead of an answer he let his fingers stroke her face fondly.

Lisbon swallowed while her heart hammered in her chest with a surprising passion, she noticed and it made her shivering. Beyond that she wasn't able to move a single muscle. She had been in love with her consultant for years but she had never lost control over her body like this before. Even the jealousy she had felt because of Lorelei hadn't paralyzed her that much.

He was so close...

She smelled his cologne. She saw the tiny green speckles in his eyes. She felt his warmth beneath her fingers. Not only beneath her fingers! His warmth was surrounding her, making her dizzy.

She tasted his breath on her tongue.

And she heard his voice which had never sounded affectionate like this before. It was almost like a verbal caress.

"You should laugh more often, Lisbon...I wish I could...For once I really wish I could..." His voice broke.

Lisbon wanted to say that it wasn't his fault, but when his thumb touched her upper lip the words got stuck on her tongue.

An unbearable longing pulsed through her veins and she inched forwards, but that little movement did it. Jane finally came back to his mind and averted his gaze, letting his hand fall down and thus breaking the spell.

Lisbon blinked, found herself back in reality and blushed.

"Sorry." She didn't even know what she was apologizing for.

After taking some deep breaths she stood up a bit shakily, and this time she succeeded in setting Jane back on his feet.

"I don't know about you but I have had enough skating for today." She attempted to make her voice sound normal and bring them back to familiar territory.

"The bruises on my back are giving me the same thoughts," Jane agreed – both to her suggestion and to the normality.

Lisbon nodded in sympathy. "Come on then, old man."

And while they were finding back to the usual light banter on their way to the exit, both of them refused to let go the other one's hand - silently agreeing that Jane's insecurity on the ice was the perfect excuse.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

After exchanging the skates for their shoes they left the ice rink and strolled towards Lisbon's car.

"You sure that I shouldn't give you a ride?"

"Yeah, don't bother. I'm going to take a walk and return to the CBI afterwards."

Lisbon hesitated and glanced at him. "You know, you're not supposed to be at the CBI on Christmas Eve, Jane."

They stopped next to her car, unconsciously standing way too close.

He eyed her while she firstly opened her mouth again but then closed it without a further word. She was struggling with herself, he could tell. There was something she wanted to say. Urgently. But she wasn't brave enough yet.

It was unusual behavior for Lisbon, but since he had a hunch about what was in her mind, Jane understood her hesitation. He had disappointed her so often this year – and even worse, he had rejected her many times, had hurt her badly, even though she would never admit it. However, Jane knew. Whenever he had looked into her brave eyes during the past months, he had noticed that.

There was only that much even a strong woman like Lisbon could take. And on the other hand she also was a woman who was *especially* protective of her heart.

So he totally understood, but it made him sad somehow. A part of him longed for her to simply spit it out while another part was afraid that she would indeed pick up the courage.

Finally, the coward in him won this round, so he interfered before Lisbon had the chance to say anything more.

"Don't worry, my dear, I'm fine." He squeezed her elbow in a soft touch and stepped back. "Good night, Lisbon."

Lisbon furrowed her brows and nodded slowly with a hint of disappointment. Whether she was disappointed in herself or him, he couldn't tell for sure, but it didn't matter. Bad enough that he had made her feel this way again.

"Good night, Jane."

He watched her getting into her car and driving away. He even stood there motionless when she was long gone.

It was not until his fingers felt like freezing that he turned away with a sigh and started his walk.

Jane had barely made a dozen steps when someone called his name and stopped him.

"Hello Patrick!" Old San caught up with him and Jane greeted back politely but a little bit startled.

"Do you mind if I accompany you a short way?" San asked while he still shook Jane's hand fatherly.

"Not at all." The CBI consultant would have preferred to be alone, but then again he was tired of brooding about something he couldn't change at the moment – although he wanted to.

After walking in comfortable silence for awhile, San turned to Jane.

"So tell me, son, have you thought about the question I asked you yesterday?"

"What question?"

San looked at him with indulgence. "I'm pretty sure, you know what I'm talking about," he said softly.

Jane remained quiet during the following minutes and his older companion let him, just walking next to him and leading the way.

Honestly, Jane hadn't pondered over a suitable Christmas wish at all. When his mind hadn't been on Red John, it had been full of thoughts about Lisbon. And while being honest, during the past twenty-four hours thinking about Lisbon had even been prevailing.

Jane put his hands into his jacket pockets as the wind freshened up and finally, just to give the nice old man an answer, he confessed, "I don't have a wish for Christmas."

"Hmm..." San hummed and glanced at him. "You sure about this, son? You know, a Christmas wish doesn't have to be about you. You can also use it for someone else. For someone who means *something*..."

The wind around them increased until it was whistling in Jane's ears and he had some difficulties to understand San.

"You might want to think about it again, Patrick," he heard him saying as if he was speaking through a wall of cotton. With the howling wind becoming so strong that it brought tears to his eyes, Jane had to close them tightly.

"Think about it, son, we still have time..."

And suddenly as though something deep inside him had been touched, Jane's mind started to wander on its own.

Someone who means something.

All of a sudden he remembered the moment on the ice not even an hour ago – when Lisbon had sat on his lap after the collision. He remembered her hearty laughter, pictured her sparkling green eyes and saw the lively red cheeks. She had looked so beautiful – she was a natural beauty anyway, but that very moment had been special – and even the memory of it warmed his heart.

"I wish I could...For once I really wish I could..." he heard himself saying and only when he felt his lips moving he noticed that the memory became one with reality. "Instead of making her sad I wish I could make her happy for once. Truly happy. I want her not to worry so much but to find some peace."

And without thinking he knew – he felt – that it was true. He had caused so much pain, so for a change, he wanted to make her happy, make her laugh like he did unintentionally earlier that day. It was almost Christmas after all.

The wind decreased and Jane blinked as if he was awakening from a dream. Confused he gazed at San who returned the look warmly.

"This is a very nice wish, Patrick. I gladly accept it."

"But what should I do to fulfill it?" He wondered more to himself.

"By making her Christmas wish come true, son," San answered helpfully.

Jane blinked and examined him with a mixture of awe and skepticism. "What is it?"

But San only smiled and when Jane averted his gaze and looked around, he suddenly found himself standing in front of Lisbon's apartment. His eyes widened in shock.

"What the-...How is that possible?" They hadn't even been on the way to Lisbon – at least that was what he thought. It wasn't possible, was it?

"San?" But when Jane turned around, the old man was nowhere to be seen.

For awhile he simply stared at the empty space next to him.

Did he finally lose his mind?

Well, Lisbon would have agreed to that, undoubtedly. Jane smiled but then his expression turned serious.

Talking about Lisbon...what now? He could hardly just stand here – on her doorstep, in the middle of the night. But now that he was here already, he couldn't just leave either, right?

That was ridiculous! Since when was he such a coward? When it concerned really important things by all means.

With a Christmassy bravery washing through his body and making his heart beat faster, he stepped forwards and knocked.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

"Jane?" When Lisbon opened her door, she was all but surprised to see him – Jane was the only one who dared to come over just before midnight. "What are you doing here?"

Even though she obviously was suspicious, she stepped aside to let him into her warm and welcoming home.

"Uhm..." he started sheepishly and by way of exception had no idea what to say. "I forgot to wish you merry Christmas." It was a miserable attempt but he wasn't able to come up with anything smarter for once.

Lisbon raised her brow. She didn't believe him. "You did?"

"Yeah."

"Ah."

They stared at each other in silence, waiting for him to get his act together.

Eventually, after some hesitation, Jane asked, "What do you wish for this Christmas, Lisbon?"

She looked at him in surprise. "You're the second, who asked about my Christmas wish today."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"So...what did you reply the first time?"

"Nothing at all."

"Oh."

Their eyes met and Lisbon was startled when she found hope in his.

"So...you want to know what I wish for...?" Now she was the one hesitating.

Jane nodded. "Please."

"I..." She swallowed and crossed her arms. "I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

This time her answer was merely a whisper. "I don't want to offend you."

And I don't want to hear you refuse – but she didn't say these words out loud.

The agent saw his tense expression softening and then he came closer, catching her hand with his cold fingers. "Listen, my dear, there's no way you could possibly offend me. Please tell me!" he almost begged now.

"I..." She took a deep breath and told herself *'Oh, screw it, you chicken!'*

"I wish for you to take a break...from Red John, Lorelei and everything. Just for now. I would like you to...stay with me for the holidays. I wish that for a moment – even if only for a blink of time – you could relax. I wish for knowing you save and not on a crazy suicide mission. And some peace...for both of us."

Unconsciously she lowered her gaze to the floor, but then she forced herself to look back at him. She was Teresa Lisbon for God's sake!

Jane had obviously guessed that she had wanted to invite him for the holidays but he seemed somewhat surprised that this actually was her *wish* for Christmas.

Lisbon wasn't sure what reaction she had expected but she hadn't anticipated that look full of true affection he was giving her now. He stared at her as if his own feelings became almost too overwhelming, so that he only managed to nod. Her already pounding heart became erratic in her chest.

Somewhere outside church bells started ringing softly.

It was midnight.

And they were still standing in her dimmed hall, looking into each other's eyes and holding hands.

"I'd love to stay with you for Christmas, Lisbon," Jane whispered and brought her hand to his lips.

Lisbon felt burning warmth sneaking not only into her heart but also on her face. "Okay..." she answered with a small smile. "You know...I was about to go to bed when you knocked. You...want to come, too?"

Jane nodded with a smug grin which made Lisbon blush even more. She rolled her eyes at him and swiftly turned away, but then he called her name.

"Yeah?" She expectantly looked over her shoulder.

"Merry Christmas, Lisbon." His voice was soothing and full of fondness.

"Merry Christmas, Jane." Still not sure whether she was dreaming or not, Lisbon entwined their fingers and dragged him softly with her towards the bedroom.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

When Jane awoke in the early morning of Christmas Day he needed a moment to recognize his surroundings. Right, he was in Lisbon's bedroom. In her bed to be exact. Under her warm covers with Lisbon herself snuggled against his back, her arm around his waist.

There wasn't anything sexual about it and they were both fully clothed. She hadn't wanted him to sleep on her couch and he hadn't cared to share a bed with her. They knew each other for nine years and had even been close friends for almost that long. There was nothing to think of it.

Lisbon sighed in her sleep and nestled the back of his neck with her nose. Jane couldn't help smiling. He always knew she was the cuddly type behind her hard cop shell and he dearly loved (not only) that soft side of her. Mother bear was in protection mood, even in her sleep, and that was way too sweet.

Jane wondered what had woken him up, since he had slept surprisingly well in her arms. Maybe it had been this strange dream which he just remembered. Instead of his usual nightmares that dream had been oddly Christmassy.

"Hey Lisbon..." He nudged her softly with his shoulder.

She moaned and tightened the grip around him.

"Lisbon!"

"What?" she murmured against his neck without opening a single eye.

"I just had a really weird dream I want to tell you about!"

"...And that can't wait for some more hours? It's my first day off!"

"Meh, you can go back to sleep afterwards."

"How unbelievably generous of you."

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, do I have your attention now?"

"No."

"Very well. Okay, I dreamed that I was in the story of 'The Nutcracker and the Mouse King'. Do you know it?"

"I think I watched this animated film called 'The Nutcracker Prince' many years ago." Lisbon yawned and wished she could simply drift off again. "I always wondered why

they called that creature Mouse King since it obviously was a disgusting rat."

"Well...I never thought about that. Anyway, I dreamed that we, you, me and the team, were living said story. I played the main role of course, you were the nutcracker, Grace was that Trudy-doll, Rigsby the old soldier Pantaloon and Cho was Uncle Drosselmeier."

Lisbon snorted. "Let me guess, the Mouse Kind was Red...wait, what? I was the nutcracker?" Now fully awake she pushed herself up to look at him over his shoulder. "Are you telling me that you were Clara and I was the prince who had to save the girl? Well, that sounds familiar."

"Kind of...despite the obvious gender confusion."

"Ha!"

He ignored her sarcasm and went on. "Additionally, my dear Lisbon, in *The Nutcracker Prince* the nutcracker might have tried to fight the evil, but actually it was Clara who saved the prince at the end."

"There's something wrong with your story. It doesn't fit reality."

"That's a question of interpretation and I – did you hear that?"

"What?!" Lisbon let her head fall into her pillow and groaned in frustration.

"There was a noise! Now I know what woke me up. I heard a noise from your front door...There it is again! Did you hear that?"

"The only noise I hear is the one my annoying consultant makes."

"Not nice! There's someone! Come on, we have to check if it's an intruder!"

"No way." Lisbon shook her head firmly. "Do it yourself if you have to, but for me it's way too soon to get up!"

"Lisbooon!" Jane whined and turned his head to look at her.

"What?! You need me to have your back?"

"Yes?!" He stared at her as if she had stated the obvious.

"A man only is brave with a woman covering his back," she murmured into his neck.

Jane smirked at her meaningfully. "Just like now, you mean?"

Lisbon flushed and tried to hide her face between his shoulder blades. "Oh shut up, smart-ass!"

XxxChristmas WishxxX

Lisbon felt truly ridiculous when she followed Jane downstairs. He had even insisted that she should take her gun with her. Ridiculous, really, but if it made him happy... And honestly, she had her fun too, as she watched him tiptoeing towards the door.

With a grin she stepped beside him while he looked through the peephole.

"So?"

"Shhh- What the hell?" Throwing all caution in the winds Jane pushed her aside and opened the door.

Lisbon blinked and found herself just as surprised as Jane. Right on her doorstep was a pile of fluffy white snow and on top of it they found a white box with a red bow.

"Is that...real snow?" Lisbon bent down to check and immediately became startled when some white crystals melted on her palm. In the meantime Jane had picked up the box and pressed his ear against its white surface now.

"I don't think it's a bomb."

Lisbon rolled her eyes. "Why would anyone put a bomb on a pile of snow? By the way, where did that snow come from? It's too warm for a natural thing."

Jane just shrugged and read the card next to the bow. "To Teresa Lisbon and Patrick Jane."

"What?" Standing up she looked over his shoulder and tried to get a glimpse of it. "From whom is it?"

"Doesn't say. Should I open it?"

"Uhm, I guess." They returned to the hall and Jane undid the bow. As soon as the box was open, both of them gasped in surprise.

On the bottom was a beautiful Christmas cake, covered with snow white fondant, and red and green mistletoes made of marzipan. Additionally, there was a note, written in red icing.

Lisbon read out loud,

"Merry Christmas, Teresa and Patrick!

I hope you got your wishes fulfilled.

Santa Claus

PS. It's Christmas, Patrick, just do it. "What the hell does that mean?"

When she looked at Jane again she expected him to look as puzzled as she did, but to her great astonishment he looked...thrilled? He even flushed!

"Jane? What is this about? Who sent this box?"

"Well, Santa Claus, apparently."

"Come on, there's no-"

He raised his hand to silence her. "I know, spare me this discussion, please. Do you have a better explanation?"

"Several, actually."

Jane shook his head and mumbled in wonder, "But who could possibly know...?"

Lisbon's expression became worried because he suddenly looked so serious. Softly she touched his arm. "Know what? Do you mean the postscript? What does it stand for?"

"Fulfillment of an unspoken Christmas wish." Still absent-minded he carefully put the cake on a cupboard and turned to Lisbon.

"Wha-" But Jane didn't allow her to finish her question. With a smooth movement he pushed her against his chest, grabbed her face with his warm hands and pressed his lips softly on hers.

Lisbon gasped in pure shock, growing stiff against him while her vision became blurred. Her heart hammered so loudly in her chest that even the angels in heaven must have heard it. Hot desire, being suppressed for far too long, flooded through her veins. When he gently parted her lips and sneaked his tongue into her mouth, she sighed and finally relaxed in his embrace. Closing her eyes she put her arms around Jane's neck and started to return his loving kiss. She felt him shivering when she allowed him to plunder her mouth, to deepen the kiss, to heighten the passion. Lisbon herself felt goose bumps spreading over the whole body and her knees becoming weak. All the nerves, every fiber of her was exploding with pleasure. What had she missed all these years?!

However, she knew this kiss – and whatever also was about to happen during the holidays – wouldn't change a thing. Not on the surface, that is. Maybe it would change those intimate moments, they shared sometimes. Though they won't act any differently at work and it certainly won't change the whole Red John topic. Or maybe it would make it even worse.

Maybe it would complicate everything.

*But for now...*she thought, while Jane pressed her against the nearest wall, his lips placing hot, open-mouthed kisses on her face and his fingers clinging to her waist.

For the time being...it would simply represent some fulfilled Christmas wishes.

The End