

Recovered Strength

Jane x Lisbon

Von Schneeblume

Kapitel 18: Hugs

Hugs

She has no idea what's going on with him. Honestly. Something is wrong. Well...maybe not *wrong* in the proper sense. It's not that he's behaving strangely in particular – not more than usually, that is – but *something* is odd.

Not that she's complaining! God knows, she's not complaining at all! But to be honest, she is confused. And a bit shocked at how intensely he's affecting her.

He has started hugging her. Out of the blue. He hugged her in the past, alright, he did so now and then, occasionally. But now he's doing it frequently. Daily to be more precisely. Twice a day to be exact.

He hugs her, when she arrives in the FBI bullpen in the morning; and he hugs her, when she calls it a day in the evening. She remembers feeling startled on the first day. Back then she brushed it aside as a strange whim.

However, to her greatest surprise, he's kept doing it. Every morning and every evening. Every day.

He always manages to get her alone. Early in the morning, there hardly is anyone else around just yet, and when she is about to leave, he uses his closeness to her desk to his advantage – or he simply catches her in the break room or in front of the elevator.

His efforts to keep these moments between them somehow make his hugs way more intimate.

After a few days she couldn't help herself and finally confronted him about it. *That's what friends do*, was all he said, *friends exchange hugs as a greeting and to say goodbye*.

She looked at him quizzically, but he just shrugged with a roguish glint in his eyes. She hasn't bothered to question him again since then. The easiest way to survive one of

his pranks is to just go with the flow.

Besides, she does enjoy *flowing* with this one. She's already used to it – it was a matter of only a few more times – and she actually looks forward to his new way of greeting and saying goodbye.

She enjoys the way he approaches her with a big, happy smile gracing his face. His look is open, honest and mischievous, but also lit by affection.

And when he wraps her into his engaging bear hug – he's like a huge cuddly teddy bear, the old softie – she finds herself surrounded by warmth and his very own, fresh and manly scent.

His hold is firm, but not too tight, he tucks her safely under his chin, and he always takes his time – until she nearly starts to question his intentions.

It isn't inappropriate. Not yet.

He's stretching the boundaries, though; blurring the lines.

She doesn't mind – but she wonders if she has the right reasons not to mind.

Maybe that's why she's never the one to initiate the contact. It can't be helped – she's feeling insecure, not only about her own motivation, but even more about his.

She's not daring to hope. At least that's what she's telling herself.

Maybe she's in denial and lost already. The way her body is on fire, whenever he touches her and holds her close, has nothing to do with friendly fondness. She shouldn't feel the urge to grab him, tear his clothes apart and throw herself at him.

She shouldn't, but she does. As soon as she is in his arms again, all she wants is to be closer, longing to learn his passion and how far he can push her own.

His hugs are torture. Sweet and painful. Mostly they are sweet.

And oh so tempting!

It's a tough job to keep a friendly yet neutral expression. Hiding her wants is twice as hard since he can read her like an open book most of the time.

However, it seems that she's getting better. Maybe she's gotten *too* good.

Because suddenly he stops. Why would he stop?!

After weeks of shared hugs, they're gone. Just like that. When he skips his greeting on a crime scene, simply sending her a friendly nod from the other side of the room, she's disappointed. She understands, though, with their colleagues around them and the body on the ground. Hopefully he'll take a rain check.

But then, in the evening, as she comes from a too long meeting with her boss, getting her purse from her desk, she notices with a sinking feeling that he's nowhere to be seen. Hoping for an unhappy coincidence, she leaves the building and tries to ignore how bereft she feels out of a sudden.

She's not getting much sleep that night.

They are just hugs, dammit! It doesn't mean anything!

Although the pang, which hits the depths of her chest the following morning, speaks a different language. They are alone, but his hands are busy with cups of coffee and tea. Too occupied to engulf her in a desired embrace.

Minutes later the bullpen is filled with life and yet another opportunity wasted.

She manages to conceal her frustration over the day and stays professional, but at a late hour her mask cracks, as she learns about the new lead he's following with someone else.

The next time he still is sound asleep on his couch and she doesn't want to wake him. Then they have that big meeting about a too important case that requires one hundred ten percent of their attention.

Afterwards it's a spilled cup of coffee on her blouse, followed by a foaming suspect chasing her (ex-)consultant over the hills.

Apart from the missing hugs everything's just normal; no other behavior is out of place. It's all fine.

How she hates *normal* and *fine*.

It takes two more days until she reaches her breaking point. It's late and they are alone, when she finally snaps.

She's done with this shit, done with missing his closeness. She doesn't want to miss his large hands on her body anymore, wants them on her back again, where they were burning their heat through her clothes. She longs for the feeling of hot breath against her ear and beard stubbles tickling her cheek. She needs his warmth, his scent, and the butterflies he causes to dance funnily in her belly. His strength, no one else knows he's hiding beneath layers of mischief, tricks and flippancy.

She's desperate for him.

Planting herself in front of his couch, she glares down on him.

"I want them back!"

"Huh?" With a sleepy blink he sits up, preparing for the storm.

"I want my hugs back!" She resists the childish urge to stamp her foot. "You can't take them away after you spent week after week getting me used to them!"

His facial expression lights up like a Christmas tree, when he fully understands the point of her protest.

"Finally!" he exclaims, "Thank God! I've started worrying you would never say it!"

Her eyes go round.

"You did this on purpose!" she accuses him, but he shakes his head.

"Not at first. But then I needed to know if you need them as much as I do." To her surprise, he's being honest and serious.

"You couldn't tell?!" she wonders with hope sneaked into her words, while she's unconsciously taking a step forward.

Shaking his head again, he gets off the couch and slowly invades her personal space.

"With you, my dear Lisbon, I feel like a clueless boy again." His voice is just a whisper that sends a shiver along her spine. He gives her no time to react at all – in fact he only needs a split second to wrap her into his arms and crush her against his firm chest. She sighs in pure ease and relaxes in an instant. Without truly realizing it, she returns the embrace and buries her face into the crook of his neck.

Oh yeah, that's what she was talking about! Her wishes and fantasies are coming back with full force, making her shudder in anticipation. This time, she doesn't fight them, though. Instead she allows them and enjoys the thrilling electricity jolting through her veins. She sighs again with pleasure and feels him tightening his grip.

Then his fingers softly trace her facial outlines, bringing goosebumps to her skin, until he gently tilts her head.

Without a warning he places a sweet but lingering peck on the corner of her mouth.

"That's your idea of saying goodnight to a friend?" she gasps against his lips and swallows.

He smirks and winks at her, while slowly retreating.

"Maybe not to a friend...but with a soon-to-be-lover that would be an entirely different story."

"Jane!" She blushes furiously and with a slap against his shoulder she chases after him. When she hears his heartfelt laughter and feels the sparkling love bubbling in her chest, she thinks that he might not be wrong after all.

The End