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Chapter 1: Allison: Chicago Med

Homing Beacon

Timing: Right after the Season 2 finale with all of the series' timing and continuity challenges. Reason for writing it? Well, I was one of many, many Shafferty fans who screamed "WTF?!" (or something very similar) at the deletion of a series' promised scene in the "Chicago P.D." crossover episode on April 30th. Raw and minimally edited with absolutely no promises of sequels/continuations. Got way too much to write otherwise.

Still wearing her gritty paramedic uniform, Allison Rafferty stood silently at the doorway of the hospital room. She placed herself just enough within the room so she wouldn't be in the way of any hallway traffic, but she couldn't bring herself to take any additional steps forward.

After watching her fiancé die from Hodgkin's, she never dreamed she'd willingly come back to this hospital. Yet, here she was for the second time just as many months. And for the same person no less.

She felt herself suffocate from the overwhelming feelings of déjà vu on so many levels and moments as she stared at Leslie Shay lying unconscious a few feet away.

When Shay's original partner Gabriela Dawson went off for firefighter training, Rafferty took her spot and remembered being completely underwhelmed at the thought of being partnered with an open lesbian (again - ugh). At least she was the PIC this time. Then again, she wasn't in the mood for *anyone's* company, never mind an open lesbian. It was easy to force the distance between them by using a strict "don't even ask, don't even tell" as the foundation for their interactions.

She had never imagined Shay would view that like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

Rafferty had to admit she eventually dropped her guard under Shay's combination of brassy spunk and heart, a combination that Rafferty probably needed despite herself. So when Rafferty left Firehouse 51 due to a 3-month suspension, with Dawson returning, she didn't want to admit

that the part that bothered her the most was missing the woman's company. Even if it was no more than the coworker ease and banter they had developed.

So when Dawson was going to participate in a one day charity event at at this hospital, Rafferty jumped at the chance to cover for her – though she would cut her own throat than ever actually admitted that to Shay. However, no one had any idea that the very same hospital event would be car bombed that morning.

Despite the first responder chaos, Rafferty easily slipped into professional mode. But despite herself, she started to notice things about Shay's increasingly haggard and weary behavior, or thought she did since no one else seem to comment on it. She even tried to give Shay a pass to take a break, but the latter woman was her usual stubborn self, and Rafferty knew the exact feeling so she wasn't going to push. After all, she wasn't Shay's keeper.

So when Rafferty heard about Shay's collapse due to that rebar wound, she was furious, impressed and terrified all at once. When Shay was still unconscious, Rafferty had spent several hours that first day sitting by the hospital bed and watching. Yet when she had to return to work and was told that Shay regained consciousness, Rafferty never came back to visit, instead sending a cryptic "Glad you're better" text.

It scared her to be that emotionally invested in someone who was... a *friend*, at best. Right? And for it to be one-sided was no less humiliating.

Why 'humiliating'? No, don't think about it too deeply. Or at all.

As an act of emotional and mental self-preservation, Rafferty pulled back from contacting Shay, thinking it best get lots and lots of space between them. This should be easy to do since Shay should not have any clue about her first hospital visits.

After her three month suspension was completed, Rafferty went back to work at another firehouse, pushing aside thoughts of the crew at 51. But when the gossip reached her ears that Gabriela Dawson was trying for the firefighter test again, Rafferty couldn't deny that unexpected feeling of hope. Without waiting or thinking, she put in for the transfer and got assurances that she would be considered first.

She wanted to send a message to Shay but thought it would be better to surprise the woman rather than indulge in false hope if the transfer didn't come through.

And then the news of the Chicago Firehouse 51's crew being caught in a building explosion hit the dispatch calls. Rafferty felt her blood chill even though her body movements were on auto-pilot with her paramedic partner to respond. Her heart felt twisted at the news of Shay being injured again.

So now she was here again. A different hospital room, but Shay was still the patient and she was the visitor.

She had tried to stay away, and was successful the first couple of days, even when she had patient deliveries to this hospital.

Yet after a particularly horrid shift, Rafferty drove here despite herself. As she walked the hallways to this room, she couldn't deny that she was seeking some solace.

And though she wanted to see Shay, she couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief that the patient was asleep. It gave her a chance to turn around and run.

But she remained frozen.

Why did this Leslie Shay matter so much to her? If someone, especially someone close to Shay, asked who she was, she honestly didn't know what to say that didn't sound incredibly stupid and lame.

Suddenly, Shay's eyes opened. She stared right at her.

Rafferty felt like a deer in headlights.

And then Shay broke out into that bright, warm smile. "Allison."

Rafferty's heart filled with that brightness and warmth. She smiled in return and stepped forward. "Leslie."

Chapter 2: Leslie: Chicago Med

Author's Notes: So reader encouragement made me crank out another chapter. I'm still not completely comfortable with committing to this as a larger story since I have not one but three books I am working on right now. Any updates will be way at the bottom of my to-do list as I need an occasional break from my other work or just want something different.

Best option is to sign up for notifications whether the next chapter is a week from now or months from now. The more people I know who are waiting for the next installment, the more I will prioritize working on it.

Leslie Shay was shocked to wake up and see Allison Rafferty standing at the door of her hospital room.

This was especially true given that Allison had never come to see her after she had been injured from the hospital bombing a couple of months ago. And as much as she didn't want to admit it, Allison was the one person she didn't want to see due to the embarrassment of being caught

hiding such a horrific wound; she also knew the other woman would take her to task for it. She had actually breathed a sigh of relief that Allison sent her a get well text, but still no visit.

Yet, she couldn't deny a deep disappointment about the absence either. She thought they had become friends but guess not.

So Leslie pushed aside those disappointing feelings once returning to work with Gabby and just considered Allison a friendly face in future encounters.

However, when Gabby pushed to take the firefighter test again, Leslie wanted to contact Allison to apply for Gabby's spot (again). But, caution kept her from initiating any contact. Gossip let her know that Allison had settled in at another firehouse and moved on with her life.

But when Chief Boden pulled Leslie into his office and asked her opinion about a transfer application he received for Allison for Gabby's spot, Leslie spent the entire rest of the day grinning from ear to ear. So much that Gabby teased Leslie if she had gotten lucky in a different way. She only smiled and retorted that she was proud and happy for Gabby, which was true.

And then that building explosion happened. Luckily, Leslie and Dawson were in the back of the building when the explosion on the first floor blew out the front windows. The force knocked Leslie against the staircase railing, snapping her left upper arm in the process and knocking her out.

So when she woke up in the hospital, she was overwhelmed by aches from head to toe and the resulting sudden change of plans. But, just like any unexpected life trauma, it was a matter of being patient and healing, and taking in the news that many other members of Firehouse 51, the least of which that Gabby herself, were recovering just rooms away.

Yet now Allison stood before her and it was only the haze of meds and the residual of deep sleep that allowed Leslie to keep her composure. Yet, she broke out into a genuine smile and simple greeting. "Allison."

The other woman didn't move for a brief instant but then returned her smile and moved forward. "Leslie... Did you think staying here was a perk of the job or something?"

"Well, I like being pampered and it's the only way to do it on my budget," she answered with an easy grin. "And meds are included, too. You just lose your privacy is all."

With a chuckle, Allison was now standing at her bedside and the two of them just smiled at each other for a moment. Then she blinked and nodded towards Shay's arm in the cast, "So give me the run down. And don't try to minimize it so that I'll have to double-check your chart. I read medicalese, you know."

"Broken arm and various lacerations. They've been basically keeping me for observation for concussion and to see if my recent wound was compromised."

"Recent wound?" Allison asked in a tone that showed she knew that Leslie damn-well knew what she had meant.

Feeling her face redden, Leslie admitted, "As you said, I'm on a frequent customer plan here... So I heard you're riding the rig with Chout. I haven't heard that you killed him yet."

"Thinking about it. Several times. It's why I'm here. I want to know how much longer I have to deal with him and if it's worth fighting the temptation to push him out of a moving ambulance. Even if he's driving."

The women shared a giggle before Leslie answered, "Unfortunately, the cast is the worst – "

"Hey," a hauntingly familiar female voice suddenly interrupted.

Leslie saw Devon standing at the doorway in what felt like a moment of very bad timing. "Oh hey, Devon. Allison, this is my friend Devon. Devon, this is Allison Rafferty, my permanent partner. At least when I get back into the rig."

"Ah," Devon said as she moved to the other side of Leslie's bed but her gaze clearly giving the new woman a full head to toe scan. Her expression was cool. "I heard a bit about you."

"I heard about you too," Allison responded just as coolly.

Before anything embarrassing could be said from either woman, Leslie said with forced brightness to the newcomer, "So why are you here? I'm not checking out until tomorrow."

"I'm just checking in to make sure you're really all right and if there's anything I can do or get to make things comfortable for you when you get back home," Devon answered as she placed a casual hand on Leslie's shoulder.

The patient suddenly felt like she was peed on as marked territory.

Unfortunately it seemed to work as Allison suddenly reddened with her own discomfort before taking a breath and announced, "Well, I'm going to take off then. Glad that you're checking out tomorrow, Leslie. I'll see you at work when you've recovered. It was nice meeting you, Devon."

The women exchanged pleasant farewells before a silence settled between the remaining women in the room.

Trying to hide her disappointment, Leslie looked at Devon and said, "You really didn't have to come."

"I told you before that I really care about you, Leslie," she replied persistently without removing her hand. "I know we're not together but I thought we were at least friends."

Leslie winced at that. "You're right, I'm sorry. But if you're ever around Allison again, just take it easy okay? She's totally straight, and she's not comfortable with women touching women."

"Since when did you care about that kind of shit?" Devon pointed out accurately. "You're usually rubbing someone's face in it."

Leslie winced again. "Yeah, well I do that to assholes. I actually like and respect Allison and she's a coworker. So I don't need drama in the ambulance, okay?"

"Yeah, sure if you say so," she relented in that way that showed she was placating her.

Then as Devon started to rattle on about everything that needed to be done back at the apartment, Leslie couldn't help but give wistful glances towards the doorway that Allison had just exited through.

Chapter 3: Allison: Molly's

Author's Note: The problem with writing fanfic is that it's too easy. Compared to "real" work I have to do. My excuse this time is that this is a mental cleansing before I start editing my 380 page book this weekend. I'll write one more chapter tomorrow night before I have to really immerse myself in other stuff.

Barely able to contain her frustration, Allison immediately went home, showered and changed only to stand in the middle of her apartment staring at the off television. She was too tense to sit down for yet another night of loneliness.

That hospital visit upset her in a way that was surprising and unsettling. She shouldn't have been so surprised that Leslie would be seeing someone. Devon was not what she expected, not that she really thought about what kind of type Leslie would have. They never really talked about Leslie's love life, with her own recovery taking center-stage.

But seriously! *A nose ring?!* Like that woman didn't exude skank enough. Did she think she was some bohemian artist type?

Allison then took a calming breath and tried to put some perspective of why she was so upset.

Yes, she was embarrassed that she thought she and Leslie would have some good quality time and conversation and it was so easily thwarted.

But maybe it wasn't really *Leslie's* company she was seeking. Maybe she just wanted *company*.

Ever since Gil's death, she became a hermit, and lost real contact with all of their friends. And when she really thinks about it, they were *his* friends, not hers. Her own social life took a backseat when she became a resident, using Gil as her only emotional lifeline through that time.

Then he left.

Maybe she gravitated to Leslie as a new emotional lifeline. And that just wasn't smart to be so limited again.

Then Allison thought about Molly's. She had always avoided going there since she returned to 51 to avoid any possibility of running into Chout. She had more than enough of spending time with him during working hours. Giving him any personal time was just suicidal.

Too much analyzing. Just go.

Allison grabbed her jacket, purse and car keys and walked out the door.

Soon enough she paused before Molly's front door and walked in.

The bar wasn't that crowded for a Tuesday night, which was fine for her. And even better, her work partner was nowhere to be seen.

But Gabriela Dawson was standing behind the bar, much to her surprise.

"Hey, Lady!" the bartender greeted. "You have top shelf written all over you."

Allison smiled and relaxed as she moved to take a stool by the bar. "You know, I think you're right. You choose, Dawson."

She grinned and pulled down a nice bottle of aged rum. "You know, I am just about to sell you a very expensive glass of alcohol. So that means you can call me 'Gabby'."

"Then use 'Allison' and we're square. I didn't know you were discharged."

"Been out a week now but still not able to do firefighter duties just yet. *And* I needed a break from Matt. I do love that man but being his full-time nurse is pushing it," she said as she handed over the glass.

"Ah, got it." Allison took a sip and let the delicious liquid settle. "Oh, that is a nice one! Good call, former PIC!"

"Thanks, current PIC! Hey, Leslie told me you stopped by today. She was pleased."

Allison paused in taking another sip. She was concerned that she felt a sudden zing inside and quickly stifled it. "Really? It was just a brief hello. Devon was there so I didn't want to cut into their alone time."

Gabby's smile instantly disappeared into fury. *"You're shitting me! Ugh! Kelly Severide is not going to be a happy man to hear she's hanging out with Leslie in the hospital."*

"That's so bad?" Allison asked with feigned innocence. She had heard the public complaints from Kelly and Brian about what went down so this was as good a time as any to get more info. "I thought she was making amends for the burglary."

"Well, *yeah*, if that's even possible," Gabby said as she wiped down the bar top but noticeably lowering her voice from any possible eavesdroppers. "But between us PIC's, there were bad signs about Devon long before that. Leslie met her at rock bottom, and from what I saw, excessive drinking and partying was the norm for those two. To the point that it started to affect Leslie's job performance."

"... So it sounds like drinking and partying isn't normally Leslie's style."

"Not to *that* extreme." Gabby then paused and thought for a moment. "Well, to be fair to Devon, I hadn't seen signs of them doing that any of that since she got back. So maybe she really has turned over a new leaf. - But I'm not going to defend her publically to anyone, especially Kelly. Not for a while yet. I need a lot more proof to be singing that woman's praises. *A lot more.*"

Allison paused and then downed the rest of her drink and slid the glass over for another serving. "Speaking of praises, you readying yourself to report to that man cave known as Austin?"

Rolling her eyes, Gabby poured another glass and remarked, "Yeah, it's roses for everyone, right?"

Chapter 4: Leslie: Car Ride Home

As she sat in the passenger seat of Devon's car and enjoyed the heat of the morning sun, Leslie stared out the window as the music thumped through the inside of the vehicle. Despite the haze of meds, she was mentally making out her checklist of what was needed to be done to get back to work as soon as possible. However, no matter what steps were involved, it all boiled down to her take things as easy as possible so that nature could take its course.

Devon hadn't said much when she came to pick her up. And the drive was no less conversationally quiet, which made Leslie a little glad. After spending so much time in the hospital room, she wanted the peace and solitude of the privacy of her home.

The music volume went down abruptly which made Leslie frown curiously.

Once the volume was low enough to her comfort, Devon glanced over from driving and asked, "So that Allison Rafferty, do you have the hots for her?"

The question hit Leslie out of the blue and she blurted in shock, "Wha - ! *No!* I told you, she's totally straight!"

Now Devon looked completely baffled as she tried to maintain steering within the traffic lanes. "What does *that* have to do with whether or not you want to fuck her?!"

Leslie's face was so red at the subject that she forced herself to regain her composure and said, "Why are you asking? It's not like we're really girlfriends."

She paused and replied seriously, "Well, that's *why* I'm asking! I wondered why you'd sleep with me on a whim but keep me at arm's distance otherwise. I was wondering if you were saving yourself for someone."

Seeing where she was finally coming from, Leslie rolled her eyes. "Look, me not wanting to fully commit to you has absolutely nothing to do with anyone else being in the picture. Even if there was someone else, which there isn't. Can you blame me after everything you did?"

Devon pulled the car into the driveway and turned it off. In the sudden engine and music silence, her tone sounded genuinely hurt. "I have been trying and trying to prove how sorry I am and you just seem to undercut *everything* while telling me that you believe and support me. If you really distrust me that much, then I'll leave you alone. I don't know what else I can do. Even I'm not going to stick around just to be your piece of ass at your convenience. I can pay off my debt to you guys without losing any more of my pride."

Leslie felt her heart twinge with guilt at the tone. "No, you're right. I'm sorry. I'm just... It's the meds you know. Gets in the way of thinking clearly sometimes."

Leslie suddenly realized that her plan to relax alone in her bed may be compromised. "How's the apartment hunting going?"

In her momentary truce with Kelly, neither of them spoke about the fact that their dual hospital stays meant that Devon had the place to herself. And when Kelly was discharged first, he and Devon were now sharing the apartment together without any referee. Though she thinks the reluctant roommates were wiser about staying out of each other's way as much as possible. She was glad that this homecoming was timed while Kelly was on shift at the station.

"Oh," Devon responded, surprised by the question. "I thought you'd want me to hang around until you were completely recovered."

Leslie paused and asked, "Why's that?"

"Well, your arm is in a cast, right? You still have other bandages. *And* you're on strict routine of painkillers. I heard what the doc said. I've got a car and a flexible schedule. I'm the perfect choice to help you." Then she paused and added with a smirk, "And I've seen and touched you naked so I can help you bathe and shower as needed. Sponge bath even."

Leslie pursed her lips to keep from making a response to that provocative comment.

Devon didn't say anything else as they both exited the car and she retrieved Leslie's duffle bag. The two women maintained their silence as they walked into the house and Leslie was relieved to see her home was clean and intact.

"Are you hungry?" Devon asked.

"No, I really want a bath and a long nap without people walking in on me all the time." Leslie then paused and said, "Yeah, you can sponge bathe me if you want."

Devon gave her a pointed look before asking, "Nurse-style or sexy style?"

She grinned back and said, "How about both?"

"... Would I still be 'just' a friend if I do it?" The seriousness of her expression was unmistakable.

Leslie stared at her for a moment before stepping forward to answer with a passionate kiss.

**** Pause for an extensive commercial break * * **

Author's Notes: So here's where I make the confession that I've never watched Chicago Fire season one. I saw enough venting on the internet to know to avoid it. I actually started watching CF when Rafferty was introduced (I got a vibe from the screencaps and write ups). And then I watched the first part of season two when I realized they were reintroducing Devon in last couple of episodes of the season. (I thought who else would be considered an uninvited guest for Shay?)

However, because I'm a canon fanfic writer, I really need to watch both seasons as well as Chicago P.D. so I can get a better sense of the characters, their history and possible story ideas.

Luckily, my planned method to watch these shows just means having the videos playing in the background while I multi-task on the computer. Once I'm caught up with the T.V. series, then I can figure out where I want to take this story. Should I make it a true novel story where there's an overarching plot to tie everything together? Or just write it as random ideas hit me, knowing that I could become bored at any moment where I can post the final chapter as "And they got together. The End."

So, I need to go away and be occupied while I let this little CF fanfic bubble in the back of my mind. See you in a bit!

Chapter 5: Allison: Home & Molly's

Author's Note: "Chicago Fire" Season 1 viewing: So I've just started watching the insemination storyline and decided I needed a mental cleansing before I subject myself to the rest of the episodes.

Allison leaned against her kitchen counter and gently pressed the ice pack to the swelling around her left eye. It wasn't a solid hit that it would be swollen shut by morning, but it's definitely going to be noticeable.

Her phone suddenly chimed on the counter. At least it was a call this time instead of yet another text of how amusing Brian's picture of her was.

She reached for the phone and paused when she saw that it was Leslie's number. They hadn't talked to each other in the month since that brief encounter at the hospital. As thrilled as she was, she knew that answering was going to open her up to a ball-busting session.

She picked up the phone and pressed the 'Send' button. "Yeah, lay it on me."

Leslie's laughter immediately burst through the phone. "You must *really* miss me now, don't you?"

She chuckled despite herself. "I miss a partner that when I say 'go left' that person doesn't think his or her *other* left. I swear it was like the two stooges. Luckily it wasn't a crisis call and the lookyloos were long gone."

"I can *just* picture it. Makes me wish I could see what you look like tomorrow morning."

"I can send you an updated picture if you want."

"I'll be expecting it first thing. Anything to break up the monotony."

"... You're bored?"

"Well, yeah! I mean, I still have a cast but everyone I would hang out are all busy with their 'jobs'... Are you up for meeting at Molly's or something? I could use the company and gossip.... I mean, we can just talk over the phone but having drinks adds to the ambience."

"*Tonight?*" Despite her exhaustion, she felt a sudden surge of hopeful energy.

Leslie paused for a moment as if she rethought what she had just said. "Well, no, we don't have to. I know you just put in a full shift. And I'm sure you're looking lovely and all. I'd also really appreciate it if you'd have to give me a ride to and from. Public transportation isn't fun at this

time of night, especially while wearing a cast... But we can get together another day and time. I'm not going anywhere so my schedule is *wide* open."

"Devon's not around right now?"

"Nope, she's visiting her dad. And even if she was, she lays low around the gang since they're not fully accepting of her as my girlfriend again."

"*Oh.*" Allison felt her stomach drop a bit. She swallowed and took a deep breath. "Well, I'm willing to come over if you're ready for me to pick you up. Your call."

"... Are you granting me PIC privileges?" The tease in her tone was unmistakable.

She smiled and said, "Just this once. *Don't* abuse it. And don't go ragging on me about what I look like. With your cast, we'll both look like we came from some sort of rugby team."

Leslie chuckled again. "Yeah, we would, wouldn't we? If we went to a lesbian bar, we'd be the talk of the town. - *Not* that I'm suggesting we go to one."

"... But you *still* want to get together tonight?"

"Molly's? I think Gabby is doing bar duty tonight. And most everyone else is already there judging by their Twitter accounts."

"I'll leave in ten minutes. Text me your address."

"Will do."

When Allison opened the front door of Molly's for Leslie, the roar of cheers and laughter upon their entrance was just the crowning sarcastic moment of her day. And of course, they were then corralled into posing for a picture together for yet another social media posting.

"We're blowing this one up for a framed picture on the wall!" Gabby declared gleefully once she made sure the picture was out on the internet.

Chout was there but laying low and aloof in a rare evening of social awareness.

Taking a sip of wine, Allison leaned against the bar as she watched the gang greet Leslie as the returning comrade that she was.

"Thanks for bringing her," Gabby commented as she prepared the latest request of drinks. "I know she's been dying to come but Devon won't drive her here."

"Well, it sounds understandable. Seems like Devon doesn't have a single fan here. Apart from the obvious one."

"Yeah..." Gabby said as they both watched Leslie laughing and joking with the guys across the room. "I'm feeling guilty about it."

Allison sighed and reluctantly admitted, "Me too."

"You know, Leslie's birthday is next month. Shortly after she's scheduled to get her cast off. Maybe we can get a group together and go spend a night partying at a lesbian club. Friendly territory for both of them, you know."

Now Allison was completely baffled and pointed to the crowd. "You want to take *all* of those guys to a lesbian club?!"

"No, not *them!*" Gabby blurted with an exasperated roll of the eyes. "Just us girls. And I'll even invite a few from CPD... Unless you think it's a bad idea. Or you just don't want to go. Which I won't blame you if you won't. I mean, we could just do a private dinner or something at a restaurant but Leslie does like music and dancing."

"No, I'll be okay with it. But I'm the designated driver," Allison said as she finished off her drink in one long gulp.

Chapter 6: Leslie: Molly's

Author's Note: "Chicago Fire" Season 1 viewing: This is my reward to me for making it to the end of the season dvd set! And it helped that I watched the last episode with every scene that didn't have Shay at 2x speed. Unfortunately I can't do that with online streaming videos.

Apparently writing these short scenes is too tempting and my brain won't rest when I have a devious idea in motion so I might as well succumb to temptation until I just have to mysteriously disappear into my other work.

Even though Gabby was the one who explained the plan, Leslie gave a very skeptical look at Allison. Admittedly quite tipsy, she leaned a little dangerously forward on the barstool as she remarked, "You're willing to spend an evening in a lesbian club?! That shiner making you all butch and brave?"

"It's for your birthday," she retorted flatly. " We're trying to support you and Devon. It's not like we're planning an orgy."

Leslie broke out into a wide grin and said, "Well now, *that's* a much, much better birthday present!"

Gabby snickered into a glass of scotch as Allison's face turned completely crimson.

"We'll be okay," Gabby added. "And I'll be her beard to keep the she-wolves at bay."

"Is that the correct way to use that word?" Allison asked seriously.

"It can work," Leslie responded with a wide grin.

Then she realized that one of the things she really missed about hanging out with Allison were the moments of giving each other hell, and this is one golden opportunity. "But I haven't said I fully agree with the idea."

The other women were genuinely stunned and confused.

"I have *one* condition!" she declared with a dramatic point to Allison so that her fingertip poked against the exposed top of the other's breastbone. "You are *not* to be the designated driver because that means you'll be sober and boring. And that'll just make you more pissy about lesbians shoving things in your face. Maybe even literally if you're so lucky! So you'll also be required to drink *at least* three alcoholic beverages of your choice!"

Ignoring the finger jabbed into her, Allison scowled knowingly. "Am I supposed to wear flannel too?"

"Don't temp me," she grinned.

Suddenly Gabby blurted unhappily, "*I* don't want to be the designated driver! I have to be sober when I'm *here!* And it was *my* idea!"

"We'll get a limo then!" Leslie declared, which satisfied Gabby who then had to tend to a drink order.

However, Leslie hadn't put her hand down when she was hit with an evil idea. She suddenly smirked and let her fingertip slide down an inch of skin. Not quite like a daily smack to Gabby's ass but it's got to start somewhere, right?

Turning completely red, Allison stiffened and gently but firmly clasped the hand to put it on the counter. "Okay, birthday-girl-to-be, you already won. I'm going to the little girl's room. Be right back."

"All righty!" Leslie declared triumphantly as she took another chug of her beer. She had barely finished swallowing when she turned to see someone else had taken the nearby barstool.

Otis stared right at her with the expression of a pleading puppy dog. "Shay, can I ask a *really, really, really* huge favor? Based on the years of us being comrade first responders, friends and even former roommates?"

Feeling every hair on her body prickle with dread, she prompted carefully, "Yes?"

He glanced around, especially towards the direction of the restroom, before saying in a low voice, "You're solid with Rafferty, right? Do you know if she's dating anyone?"

She wanted to shut down the conversation but the deeply honest part of her admitted the truth. "No, we haven't talked about her... current situation."

"Well, can you suss her out? And if she's not, put in a good word for me? You know, wingwoman-style?" The seriousness on his face was very unusual and disarming. "Like, how I would be a wingman for you, *if* you had ever needed one. And *if* I could ever spot another hot lesbian before you do."

"How could I ignore such flattery?" she murmured. "But, why do you think you need me to intervene? You're cool with her, right? Ask her yourself. You posted that picture of her shiner after all."

"It was just ball-busting fun. She's different than the usual babes who come by the firehouse," he admitted with a shrug and a blush, like a guy who's spent his childhood years getting girls' attention by pulling their pigtails. "But that's why I need a little real intel first. And I have this extremely rare chance that Severide isn't beating me to someone just by his being alive. Plus, if she's into someone else and it's just casual, then I just have to wait and see if it fizzles and learn from it as much as possible for my turn."

Leslie then spotted the subject in question emerge from the restroom door and said, "Here she comes."

Otis practically jumped from the barstool and gave a nervous nod and smile to Leslie and then the approaching Allison before scampering back into the crowd of chatting patrons nearby.

Allison frowned curiously at his abrupt departure but then seemed to brush it off as she looked at Leslie. "Hey, my aspirin is wearing off and I think that's nature's sign that I should pack it in for the night."

"Oh, sure," Leslie said as she glanced around. "Looks like Kelly already left with Erin. Sorry, do you mind taking me home after all?"

She shook her head with a smile. "Not at all, that was part of the deal."

Chapter 7: Allison: Car Ride Home

Allison had to admit her mood started to turn sour shortly after they had arrived at Molly's. While she did look forward to spending time with Leslie, she realized that their arrival meant the other woman's time and attention would be mostly spent with everyone else. Which she honestly didn't mind, but then her exhaustion from the day started to hit her, and the aspirin was barely subduing the ache of her black eye.

So she was glad when Leslie finally agreed to be driven home.

To her surprise, Leslie kept quiet as she started to steer her car away from the bar. Probably enjoying her little beer buzz.

But the silence didn't last long.

She felt Leslie glance at her before she said, "I'm honestly grateful that you were willing to be my chauffeur tonight. I owe you one. Like a dinner or something."

"Don't worry about it," Allison replied. "I'm glad you enjoyed yourself."

"I could tell you didn't. You were clearly very tired and didn't drink much. And I'm also sorry if I crossed any lines tonight. I won't remember the details in the morning. But like I said, I owe you."

"I underestimated how tired I was. Just means I'll have a good solid sleep in tomorrow."

"Well, that's definitely something to look forward to..."

Allison could tell by the fade into pause that there was something else the woman wanted to say so it was best just to wait for it to happen.

"So," Leslie said after a minute, "someone wanted me to find out if you were dating anyone. And if you would be interested in a recommendation?"

That definitely jerked Allison awake and she almost swerved to the side. Quickly regaining her composure and control of the car, she took her turn for some thoughtful silence. She could feel Leslie watching her profile curiously.

She took a breath and finally said, "Wow. Well, I'm flattered but if it's someone from tonight, then I'm assuming it's someone who's part of the firehouse and I'm not a fan of dating coworkers. For myself at least. A humongous can of worms. It's just a lack of boundaries that I've seen lead to disaster more often than not, so it's best to not even go there."

"That's fair. But maybe this is a *really* amazing and incredible guy. You still want to pass?"

"If he was *that* incredible, I would have pursued him by now."

Leslie seemed satisfied with that. "Okay, that's fair. But you're not the tiniest bit curious who asked?"

"It's best I don't know so things don't become awkward. And you can pass that on to him."

"Will do... So you like boundaries?"

Allison squirmed a bit at the question. She could tell this would lead to another provoking conversation. "I don't mean to sound so black and white, but I like it when really private matters stay that way. At least out of the work environment."

"Like not being subjected to other people's dirty phone calls?" Leslie asked out of genuine curiosity.

Allison cast her a knowing glance. "Well, truth to be told, I'd feel the same way if it was a heterosexual situation. The *only* person who gets explicit knowledge of what I like in bed is the person I'm actually sleeping with. I don't broadcast my details to people and I don't want them doing it to me."

"You just admitted you use a bed." There was a definite smirk in her tone.

"Sometimes," she relented with a chuckle.

"Well, is it too invasive of *me* to ask if you *are* dating anyone? I mean, you know about me and Devon. And I'd like to think we're friends outside of work too."

Feeling a deep sense of dread at the subject, Allison gripped the steering wheel a little tightly as she admitted, "I'm not dating anyone. I'm not ready to open that door yet... And of course the longer I wait, the more my mom is convinced that Gil's passing has permanently scarred me."

"Like setting an impossible standard?"

She gave a conceding shrug. "He died before I could find out that he wasn't really perfect after all . So yes, an impossible standard."

"At least you know what kind of man is a match for you. I'm sure you'll take a chance when the next right one comes along."

"Well, aren't you the romantic optimist?"

"Hey, I want everyone to be a gay and happy. And if they can't be gay, then at least they can be happy."

Allison actually thought that was amusing and just laughed.

Leslie just seemed very content with that reaction as she broke out into a pleased smirk.

Chapter 8: Leslie: Home

As Allison drove the car up to her home, Leslie was surprised to see Devon's truck parked outside and the apartment's inside lights still on. "Hunh, I thought she'd still be out of town."

Her driver pulled up to the curb and asked, "Do you want me to come in?"

"No, I'll be fine. You need to get home." Leslie then paused with concerned at Allison's clear exhaustion. "If you're feeling too tired to drive, we've got a guest bedroom if you want to crash for the rest of the night."

While Leslie wanted to be gracious, she was really hoping the answer would be "no." While she had let Devon know that she was going to Molly's, she purposefully left out the crucial detail of how – or more precisely – *who* was going to take her there.

She knew Devon was threatened by Allison for some reason, no matter how much Leslie tried to tell her that there was nothing going on between them. It was just easier to avoid those details when possible. But when it came to moments like these where she had to reveal Allison's involvement, it felt like she had been busted on some level.

Allison glanced at the lit windows and shook her head. "I can make it home without any problems. I only live twenty minutes away without traffic."

"Oh. All right," Leslie said with a little relief as she started to undo her seatbelt. "I'm not kidding about the dinner rain check. I'll give you a call later to firm it up. And you better send me that updated picture of your shiner!"

"Sure thing. Night!"

Minutes later, Leslie walked thru the door and looked around to find no one was on the first floor. She heard rummaging upstairs and so she yelled out, "Hey, I'm home!"

There was a pause and then Devon shouted down, "Up here!"

Leslie walked up the stairs to the bedroom they shared and was surprised to see a rushed Devon packing a couple of boxes that were spread out on the bed. She had a fleeting sense of panic but then noticed that they contained items that were clearly Devon's, clothes included.

"Looks like you're planning to move out," she remarked as she leaned against the doorway and watched curiously.

Devon gave her a glance and said, "Sorry, I was hoping to be done by the time you came home so I wouldn't wake you tomorrow. Turns out Dad's surprise was that he was getting out in a month after cutting a deal. So he decided to move to Chicago, to get away from the old gang. He

and his girlfriend already got a house across town and he's offered to let me move in. Rent free. I wasn't about to turn him down."

"Oh." Leslie couldn't think of anything else to say as she tried to absorb this.

Upon the silence, Devon paused and looked at her. "I thought you'd be pleased with that. Kelly will certainly be home more often, I'm sure."

"I—I'm just surprised. But you're right to jump on this while it's hot... So it'll be just you three?"

"It's a small house but we'll have separate bedrooms. Hell, this place is bigger. And I admit you'll have the better bed for sleepovers."

"Well, glad this worked out. Anything I can do to help?"

Devon gave a pointed look at her cast. "Really? – Is Kelly still downstairs?"

Leslie winced as the conversation went into the one subject she wanted to avoid. "No, he's over at Erin's again. Allison gave me the ride home. She just dropped me off at the curb so she's already gone."

Devon abruptly paused and then she gave a clearly forced smile. "Well, good... How was it at Molly's? Did you see everyone?"

"Pretty much." She then smiled brightly herself and said, "Hey, to make up for the dudes icing you out, Gabby and Allison want to take a group of us out dancing for my birthday. After the cast is off, of course. I was thinking of recommending Deville's. We're going to rent a limo so no one has to drive."

Her girlfriend didn't respond for a moment as she went back to packing. "Sure, why not. Sounds like it'll be cozy. Very very cozy... I just need a few minutes and then I'll clear the stuff off the bed."

"Take your time," Leslie said as she stifled a yawn as she started to take off her jacket. "I'm going to take a shower."

Suddenly her felt her phone buzz with a text message. It was from Otis: "Find out anything yet?"

"Who's that?" Devon asked.

"Just Otis. Tonight he ambushed me about setting him up with Allison. So I have to tell him no-go because she doesn't date coworkers."

"Really? That's the only reason? That sounds lame."

Leslie swallowed a sigh and remarked with a barely contained edge to her tone. "No, she's still quite emotionally scarred from her *deceased male fiancé*. So she's not on the market at all any time soon."

Devon made no other comment as she went to the closet to do another check of anything she might have left behind.

Feeling that their conversation was done for the moment, Leslie responded to Otis's text: "Not dating but doesn't date coworkers. You're anonymous."

There was a pause before he responded, "Good to know. Thanks for trying."

Leslie then typed a message to Kelly: "Devon's moving out tomorrow."

Without waiting for a response, Leslie locked and tossed her phone on the dresser before proceeding to wind down for what remained of the night.

Chapter 9: Allison: 51 & Chicago Med

***Author's Notes:** So I've decided to make this a novel-style story, that way there's an ending to look forward to. What that ending is exactly, I don't know yet. While I've introduced all of the plot lines that I want to explore, I really am writing this thing as I'm going along. However I realize I have a certain anxiety about wanting to get this story completed before Season 3 begins, before I become thrilled, frustrated or furious with the "real" TV. show. Fingers crossed.*

At the start of the next work shift, Allison sat in the common room with her morning tea and paper. As a few people started to file in, she put up with the expected teasing comments about the dark patch around her left eye before returning her attention to the news of the day.

"Hello, my dear friends and comrades!" Otis announced as he walked into the room with a large tray of piroshkies. "Here's the latest batch from Mamochka Zvonecek's kitchen!"

He put the food on the table, right in front of her. She glared at him and he just grinned.

As everyone else immediately gathered around the table, Allison stared at the tray of food and knew there was no will-power to fight the temptation.

She sighed and reached out to grabbed one. "*Again?! I swear, Brian, I have gained at least five pounds in the past three weeks.*"

"That's a quarter of what I've gained," Mouch declared as he grabbed three of them in the first snack of the day.

As she took a bite, she looked at Otis and Cruz, who had his mouth full as well. "You two are honestly swinging by his mom's home before every shift just to get a box of these?"

"Hey, with food like this, I don't mind the detour," Cruz answered with a shrug. He then looked at his proudly beaming roommate and asked seriously, "Dude, why has your mom been on this excessive cooking trip? She's not processing drama Russian-style, is she?"

Otis looked at both of them blankly and then blushed and blurted, "How am I supposed to know? Do you want her to stop?"

No one was going to go there as they happily munched away.

"Oh awesome! Piroshkies!" Severide declared with genuine enthusiasm when he came into the room. The man who was normally very edgy and gloomy these days seemed unusually chipper that morning.

"You've got a grin from ear to ear, my man," Otis observed. "Is it related to a member of the female-gender?"

"You can say that," Severide said as he bit a piroshky in half. "Devon finally moved out a couple of days ago."

Allison and everyone else in the room paused in shock and bewilderment.

"Whoa! Does that mean Shay broke up with her?!" Otis asked with a distinct note of hopefulness in his tone.

Severide grimaced and rolled his eyes. "I wish! No, they're still together. But at least I feel like I've got my home back. I don't know the details and I don't care. I'm just glad she's gone, except for their 'date nights'. It's a step forward as far as I'm concerned. We just have to work on breaking them up next."

"I hear ya," Otis agreed as everyone went back to eating, chatting or whatever they had been doing a few minutes before.

Taking another bite, Allison frowned to herself as she tried to focus back on the newspaper before her.

Standing at the counter of the emergency room at Chicago Med, Allison tried her best to keep from looking too agitated as she waited for the paperwork to be cleared. She knew some day she'll have to get over her hatred of this hospital but there was a deep part of her that didn't want to.

"—fferty! Raff! *Allison!*"

At the hauntingly familiar male voice, she turned to see Dr. Lucas Bradford rushing down the hallway towards her. The clean-cut man with the cropped black hair and glasses looked just like he did the last time she saw him when they were residents together.

When he stopped just a few feet from her, he was clearly winded as he gasped for air. "I-I finally caught you this time!"

"I didn't know I was being hunted," she answered truthfully. Her instincts made her feel reserved but she wanted to be fair to someone that she had considered to be one of the good guys from her residency days. "It's been a while. How are you doing?"

Meanwhile, she got the signal from the nearby admin that everything was taken care of so she was finally ready to go to the waiting Chout in the ambulance.

"I'm doing good!" he said as he tried to regain his composure by straightening his glasses and tie. "I heard you were doing the EMT life so I see that it's true. Or that's the best Halloween costume yet. Is that black eye part of the job?"

"Got to show that I do paramedic work Chicago-style," she joked as she gave a display whirl. "The job pays the bills and keeps my med school brain cells active."

"Well, you look good," he said with a grin. "Really good."

"Um, thanks. How's Brittany?"

"*Oh!* She's doing good, last we talked. We actually broke up a few months ago. It'd been a long time coming. Probably even before you left... So, you're not coming back to finish the program?" he asked sincerely.

"I haven't really thought about it," she answered truthfully. "Look, my partner is waiting for me and things have been busy today."

"You're right, you're right!" he said. He pulled out his wallet and retrieved a business card for her. "Look, if you ever want to join us for happy hour sometime, give me a call. I mean, I know you can always just call the hospital switchboard but this has my cell number. Honestly, it would be good to sit down and unwind over drinks and crappy food."

"That sounds like an offer to make my mouth drool," she said as she pocketed the business card. "Always were the charmer, Bradford."

"You know it, Raff," he said with a wink.

As she walked away, Allison could feel her tension return two-fold.

Leslie sat on the kitchen stool and stared in amazement as Allison scurried over the stove full of hot pots and pans.

"I don't want it to sound like I'm complaining," Leslie said as she took a sip of tequila, "but I honestly don't know how my payback rain-check dinner turned into you coming over and cooking this extravagant meal."

The chef flashed her a grin. "I'm Italian on my mom's side. And my grandmama always said that if you give an Italian woman a kitchen and mouths to feed, you give her a piece of heaven."

"You must eat fantastic *every* night."

She winced. "Well, cooking just for myself doesn't qualify as heaven. So this is a treat for me. Plus, I'm not about to go to a restaurant with both of us looking like the losing team of some ultimate fighter match."

Leslie shrugged. "Say what you will. I thought we would've gotten excellent service, whether out of pity or fear."

"Yeah, but a restaurant can't beat *this*," Allison declared as she came over with a serving spoon of steaming red sauce and held it up to the other woman. "Here. Tell me you feel Little Italy on your taste buds."

Leslie gamely took a sip of the offered sauce and then broke out into an impressed smile. "Okay, you win! You got my taste buds' full attention and anticipation."

Allison just looked pleased as she did a check that every pot and pan could momentarily be left alone. She then took a sip of wine and gave her a curious look. "So are you doing okay without your live-in nurse?"

Leslie reluctantly nodded. "Yeah. Devon as sexy nurse was great in theory but she does sexy way much better than nurse."

"But you two are still solid relationship-wise, right?"

"Oh yeah! I mean, I know where she is *this* time. After all, she did it all for her Dad and his new home is now where she is. You can't fault that kind of devotion."

Allison took a sip and then conceded with a nod. "It does sound noble. So does that mean you're going to finally meet the man?"

Leslie blinked as the thought occurred to her for the first time. "Yeah, I guess that's coming. I've never done well with in-laws. The parents of my previous girlfriend were all smiles and presents when we were together but they definitely jumped for joy when she and I broke up. Both times."

"Ouch. That's another thing that doesn't make me excited about getting back into the dating game. My entire picture with Gil was perfect. From great in-laws to him working at home as a consultant so he could be the Mr. Mom while I be Dr. Dad."

The comment stunned Leslie as she felt an emotional ache that she had thought had been long buried.

"*You want children?*" Then she realized how odd that sounded since Allison never said or did anything to indicate otherwise. "Sor-sorry I didn't mean to sound so shocked. I just didn't view the whole picture of what losing a fiancé really means."

Allison gave her a sad smile. "A boy and a girl. Maybe a third if my mom and dad have their way. That was the plan... And if I think about it, that's probably what will finally get me back into dating. I want kids but not by myself."

"Yeah, th-that's completely understandable," Leslie admitted as she finished off her drink and started to pour herself another.

"Okay, Chica," Gabby's voice came from the cell phone, "The limo's booked. They'll pick us up starting at seven and we have dinner reservations at eight. And for the record, you and Devon aren't paying. The rest of us will split your shares."

"Sounds good. Thank you," Leslie answered numbly as she sat on the couch and pressed the remote control for the next channel.

"... Leslie, are you okay? You sound a little less than excited given what we're talking about."

"Oh, it's not that," she responded. Not able to shake the low-burning glum mood she had been fighting for the past couple of days. Since after her dinner with Allison. "Gabby, I need your honest opinion about something."

"Of course. What kind of honest?" Though her tone sounded chipper, her concern was clearly evident.

"BFF honest. Think you're up for it?"

"BFF, hit me."

Leslie took a fortifying breath and then just blurted, "Devon won't let go of the idea that there's something going between me and Allison. No matter *what* I say."

"*Really?!*" Gabby was clearly surprised.

"I don't know where she's getting it from. I mean, you've seen me and Allison interact more than she has. Do you think we act inappropriate? Like even on the remotest level?"

"No! Hell, you and I flirt more than you and her."

"Exactly! That's what I'm thinking! But Devon instantly felt threatened by Allison. It started the instant they met in the hospital... I mean, yeah Allison and I obviously have some things in common than Devon doesn't but she doesn't know that. It's not like that kind of stuff just – just *shows.*"

"Do you think it's because Allison's single? I mean, does Devon act like that about any of your other single friends?"

Leslie thought about it for a moment and shook her head even though this was a phone call. "I don't know anyone else who's single right now. But then again, when we go to parties or clubs, she's always at my side so there's no opportunity for anyone to get ideas that I'm even remotely available. And I sure as hell don't playful flirt with other lesbians. That's just an open invitation for dyke drama. I even told Devon that I have absolutely no interest in straight women because of my experience with Clare."

"Is that true?" Gabby now sounded bewildered.

"Well, *no*, but I threw it out there just to make her ease up. I mean, I feel like we're not in rational land so I don't need rational reasons."

"Have you talked to Allison about this?"

"Uh, no. It's embarrassing enough to talk to it about you. I mean, I don't think there's anything she can do. She's not doing anything now. So short of her not speaking or making eye contact with me, I don't know if it can be helped. And if we're going to act like there's an invisible wall between us all night, well, that'll just make it seem like there *is* something there."

"Yeah, I hear what you're saying. And you're right to leave Allison out of it. Okay, well, thanks for letting me know. I'll play intervention on birthday night if I see anything that could be a red flag moment. You feel better now?"

Leslie thought about it and smiled in that it could be heard in her tone. "Yeah, I am. Thanks, BFF!"

"Of course, Chica!"

Weeks later, with her black eye now completely gone, Allison trudged into the firehouse locker room to start the latest shift. While she had it marked on her calendar that Leslie would return to work in two weeks, every day that now passed seemed to be weighed down to a crawl with too much hope and anticipation. They hadn't seen each other since that dinner and it definitely felt too long.

As she opened her locker in the empty room, she sighed heavily to herself.

"Hey, PIC," a familiar voice from behind whispered into her ear, "Can I go for a ride-along. Like permanently?"

At Leslie's tease, Allison froze and turned around slowly to make sure she hadn't imagine that. She was then almost nose to nose with the grinning blond, who was in full uniform and without a cast. She immediately wrapped her in a grateful hug. "I don't care how or why you're here but you better not be kidding!"

Leslie laughed merrily as she hugged her back. "Wow, you've got the grip of a rescue victim!"

"Shay! You're back!" Herrmann declared as he walked in.

The women abruptly parted as Leslie then embraced him in a hug.

Getting her bearings, Allison asked, "Why are you here so soon? We weren't expecting you for another two weeks."

Leslie waved and flexed her recently freed arm demonstratively. "My doc determined I had healed quicker than expected. So I jumped at the chance to get back. I had already let Chief know a couple of days ago so Chout wouldn't be coming into work today. I'll wait for you guys in the common room."

Allison stifled her sigh of relief as she started to focus on changing into her work uniform. She felt a huge weight lift from her shoulders and she felt herself smile a little more readily than before.

Moments later she and Shay were sitting cross from each at the long table, where the latter was in a lively conversation with Herrmann and Mouch. Allison had a pleased smile as she had split her attention between them and her morning tea and paper.

"My fellow friends and comrades!" Otis declared as his trademark grand entrance with yet another large container of food, "And here we have Mamochka Zvonecek's - *Shay!*" he stopped into an abrupt squeak, "You're back so soon! Th-That's great!"

As all of the guys got to their feet in anticipation, she narrowed her eyes at him and asked, "Yeah, I am, Otis. What's that?"

"A little bit of Russian culinary love!" Mouch declared. "Just put the tray down, Otis, and back away like a good boy!"

Clearly a little thrown, Brian remained frozen for a moment but then under the hungry glare of many of his comrades, he stiffly put the tray of pierogies down in the usual spot before the two women.

Allison explained to her partner as she reluctantly grabbed the pastry. "It's been will-power torture. Brian's mamochka has apparently been on a cooking binge where we've been the fattening receivers of the excess."

Grabbing one herself through the swarm of firemen gathered around them, Leslie narrowed her eyes at Brian even more. "Oh really? How long has this been going on?"

"Oh, about-about two weeks or so," he tried to casually answer as the gathering of firemen started to subside. "So, you're back already! That's great! Really great!"

"Yes, it's great! And I hope your mom isn't feeling like a slave or something, you know to her darling son... *and his co-workers*," she said as she pushed the tray down the table, away from them and out of arm's reach.

As she munched herself, Allison sighed a little in relief that the food now required a little effort to get. Not much, but it would be enough to curb future temptation.

He nodded in anxious agreement. "I need to talk to Mama about see if she's, like, going to stop any time soon."

Cruz sat down with them and declared, "I'm torn about that. The only reason I'm not feeling guilty is that she seems thrilled to be doing it."

"I'll just *bet* she does," Leslie commented to Brian as she took a calculated bite of the food.

"Hey, Shay," Cruz suddenly added. "Your timing is perfect. We were talking about getting a group together to go to the fire academy dinner. Since there's a few of us who aren't dating and instead of scrambling for to fill our plus ones, we'd thought it'd be fun to go as a group so we can sit together."

"Like how we're doing right now?" Leslie asked.

"But with fancier threads, food and drinks. You going with Severide again this year?"

"No, I think he's planning to take Erin."

"Well, then you can join us! We were trying to convince Rafferty to come."

"Oh, you were, were you?" Leslie asked as she looked at Brian, who flashed a grin back. "So, Allison, are you going?"

She took a sip of tea and responded with a shrug, "I don't know. I had told the guys that it's not really my thing. It's been a couple years since I've worn serious heels... Would *you* go?"

Leslie looked at all of them, pausing the longest on Brian. "Well, this isn't an event that Devon would care about. And if I recall, last year's food was pretty good and we had a good time. So yeah, I'm game. And I think you should go too."

"... All right." Allison now felt a certain level of anticipation at the dinner that she didn't feel before. She smirked as she took a sip of tea, "But I'll have to see if any of my fancy dresses still fit. They may not after being fed by Mamochka Zvonecek for the past couple of weeks. And I'm certainly not going to buy a new expensive outfit for a group date."

"Oh, yeah, you've got a point," Brian declared as he thought about his own potential weight gain. "I'll definitely tell my mama that I won't bring anymore in. She'll understand. Luckily the dinner isn't until next month so we all have time to work it off."

"Well, there is a reason why the saying isn't a way to a *woman's* heart is through her *stomach*," Leslie remarked as she finished off her pierogi.

Allison laughed at that as Brian blushed.

Chapter 12: Leslie: Chicago Med & Biker Bar

"Leslie! You're back!"

Standing by the ER desk, the paramedic team noticed Dr. Kendra approaching with a broad, warm smile.

Leslie gave a quick glance to Allison and murmured, "Sorry, I should say 'hi'."

Allison nodded. "Go do it. I'll take care of the paperwork and wait for you at the rig."

"You sure?" she asked. Now that she knew of Allison's history with Chicago Med, she was concerned about the latter woman's comfort level whenever they had to go there.

Even though she was clearly a little stiff, Allison gave her a gentle shove and motioned her on.

Leslie then greeted the approaching doctor with a large smile and arms wide-open.

The two women quickly caught up with the details of Leslie's absence and return. Once done, Leslie turned to see Allison was no longer at the desk, but instead talking to a guy in the doctor's coat near the exit. She was stunned to see Allison smiling and apparently joking with the man.

"Oh, so he's going for it after all," Dr. Kendra muttered knowingly.

"Who is he?" Leslie asked, trying to make the question sound as casual as possible even though she felt a certain amount of uncomfortable tension build within her.

"Dr. Lucas Bradford. They were residents together. I always suspected he had a crush on her even though they were involved with other people. I guess it was just a matter of time and luck to make things work out." The doctor then glanced at her watch. "Well, I've got an appointment to get to. It was great seeing you, Les. We should do dinner sometime."

"Sure thing," Leslie said as she watched the other woman exit.

Then she turned back to Allison and Dr. Bradford and realized why she felt at odds. It was like that first day Allison had reported to 51 where she smiled and laughed with everyone else but iced out her new lesbian co-worker. While Leslie knew this situation was no way like that, she couldn't help but feel a deep sense of déjà vu.

Seeing that their conversation didn't seem to end any time soon, she took a breath and stepped forward.

When there was a pause, she gently interrupted, "Hey, Allison, I'll wait for you in the rig. Take your time."

Allison then flashed that warm smile to her and said, "Wait, I'm coming with. - Oh, Lucas, this is my partner Leslie Shay. Leslie, this is Dr. Lucas Bradford. We've got to go."

Leslie forced her most pleasant smile to the friendly man who offered his hand for a shake.

"Great to meet you!" he said with a hearty handshake that seemed oblivious to the fact that he was shaking a woman's hand and not another man's. "I've been trying to convince Allison to join us for happy hour. You should come too and tell us any scandalous stories about her as an EMT."

"Nothing scandalous to tell," Leslie said with an evasive shrug. "She's a great paramedic. I'm proud to have her as my partner."

Allison gave her a playful nudge with the elbow before she said, "Bye, Bradford. I'll chat with you later."

As the two women walked down the hallway and were out of earshot, Leslie commented, "Seems like a nice guy."

"He's one of the better ones."

"... You interested in him? Seems like he might be interested in you."

Allison paused in responding.

"I'm asking as a friend. Not a co-worker," Leslie added.

"I know. But the answer is that I'm not sure. I've never viewed him like that before. I suppose I should..." she trailed off into a thoughtful silence, her previously friendly smile now gone.

Sensing not to push the issue, Leslie merely responded, "Oh, okay."

Taking a swig from her beer bottle, Leslie leaned against the bar wall as she watched the group of burly older men in t-shirts and jeans and tattoos challenging each other over the pool table.

A clearly pleased Devon approached her and said, "Well? I told you he was cool, right?"

She responded with a smile and a nod. "Yeah, he's a nice guy. I'm glad I finally got to meet him."

"Yeah, well, he wanted to meet you too. Just to see if I still always get hotter women than him," Devon said with a smirk.

"And do you?"

"Of course!"

Leslie grinned and gave her a kiss. "So are you going to stay over tonight? It's been a week since we've had some alone time."

Devon shook her head. "I can't. My latest client has me doing these morning shoots that I don't dare be late for, and they end up wiping me out. I should be free in a week. Then we'll make up for it big time. Prepare yourself by doing a lot of stretching exercises."

"Looking forward to it." Leslie then returned her attention to the pool players before them. "I would never have guessed your dad just met those guys a few days ago. They seem like longtime friends already."

"That's Dad," Devon declared with clear pride. "He could turn a stranger into a friend in five minutes. It looks like this move to Chicago will be what he needs to finally get his life around. He just needed a second chance. Like you gave to me."

"I'm glad," said Leslie as she kissed her again.

Chapter 13: Allison: Shayveride Home & Restaurant

Parking her car on the street, Allison took a deep breath to fortify herself for the evening to come.

As she turned off the engine, she couldn't deny the mix of dread and anticipation. She didn't dare try to weed out the reasons for each emotion because she knew was on the verge of overthinking. And when that happens, she would take the path of aversion, which would mean in this case to start the car and drive home.

A tap on her side window broke her concentration and she saw Gabby smiling at her through the glass.

Allison smiled in return, surprising herself that it didn't feel forced. That's when she realized that's how she needed to view the upcoming evening: spending time with her female friends. Friends she sorely needed to keep from being a one hundred-percent isolated cat-lady during her off-hours.

She exited the car and asked, "Ready to be immersed in an evening of non-stop estrogen?"

"Best remedy for working at Austin," Gabby said with a nod and grim reference to her neanderthal work environment.

They walked up to the apartment and rang the doorbell to be greeted with a pleased and smiling Leslie.

As they greeted each other with a warm hug, Allison noticed Devon standing in the background and watching quietly.

Even though she was trying to give Devon the benefit of the doubt for Leslie's sake, Allison couldn't shake the instinctive first impression from the hospital as well as news of what Devon did. However, she trusted Leslie's judgment and told herself that had to be the most important thing. But it didn't mean she was ready to greet Leslie's girlfriend with a warm hug and smile.

At the same time, she wasn't surprised that Devon didn't regard her with open friendliness either since Allison was no doubt another person who could bad mouth her in front of Leslie. Guess the precaution about being friends was quite mutual.

Ignoring her, Allison turned to greet Erin Lindsay and Trudy Platt of the Chicago PD, who had been waiting as well. Given that they were also dating men of 51, Gabby thought it would be fun and interesting to invite them, more out of a joke but was pleased that they took up the offer.

Allison greeted each of them with a nod and a handshake.

All of the women were dressed in a variation of blouse, pants and dancing shoes, showing that they were of a single intent that night.

She and Devon then regarded each other with a look of acknowledgement and a stiff nod, making it clear that there were no expectations on either side for a dance with each other later.

With Devon's clear hostility, Allison made a conscious effort not to take a seat right next to Leslie at the Chinese restaurant. However, by circumstance, it meant she was now directly across the table from the quiet and watchful Devon, whose flat expression showed she was just as thrilled with the mutual view.

"A toast to the birthday girl!" Gabby declared with a raise of her wine glass. "With wishes of many many more to come. So we can have more nights like these!"

After the glasses were clinked, Leslie gave a wry grin at them. "Yeah, we'll continue to pretend the night is about *me*. I know you're all really here because your men don't dance and you just want a chance to boogie without abandon."

"Boogie'?" Trudy repeated with a dry dig in her tone. "Are we going to a God's honest disco?"

Gabby was quick to pipe in with "Um, no and no. But Leslie promised this place has good music and a big dance floor."

"Yeah, it's usually a gay guy's dance club but on Friday's they cater to the female side of the LGBT spectrum. Give a us chance to see Raff get drunk and funky," Leslie teased with a wiggle of her eyebrows.

Allison shook her head with a scowl. "I am committed to three drinks for the evening. And *this* one counts!" she said with a pointed sip of her wine.

"That's cheating!" Leslie pointed out half-seriously.

"No, that's the rule you made when *you* were drunk!" Allison retorted with a smirk. "Gabby was there as a witness."

"That is true," Gabby confirmed with authority.

Leslie gave an exaggerated roll of her eyes. "Okay, fine! I'll double the limit for my next birthday."

While everyone laughed, Devon's face darkened slightly but she remained quiet and watchful.

After the giggles subsided a bit, a slightly confused Erin suddenly asked, "So, Allison, are you also dating someone at 51?"

Before Allison could respond, Leslie piped in, "No but there *is* someone interested in her."

"What!" Gabby perked up, her ears ready for gossip. "*Who?!*"

Blushing, Allison said, "I don't date coworkers so it's a non-issue. *And* very, very old news."

She glanced over to see Devon narrow her eyes slightly in curiosity.

Leslie gave her a pointed look and said, "I was talking about that Dr. Lucas."

"But that means there still is someone at 51 interested in you?" Gabby persisted.

Turning even more red, Allison said, "No, there is no one at 51 in the picture. And as for 'Dr. Lucas', he's a guy I was a resident with at Chicago Med. He hasn't asked me out on a date, just to happy hour. He even invited Leslie."

The blond then blurted, "Yeah, to talk about *you!*"

"*Ohhh!*" Gabby and Erin declared knowingly in unison.

Trudy nodded and remarked, "Yes, Allison, he's got the hots for you."

"Well, you could always ask him out," Gabby pointed out. "Maybe he needs a sign that you'd be interested."

"I'm considering it," Allison admitted with a vague shrug.

"*You are?!*" Leslie asked in shock. And then realizing how everyone suddenly looked at her, she added, "Yes, of course you are."

Just then the waiter showed up with their first entrée, which provided a nice shift in the conversation.

Allison took a grateful sip of wine, only to briefly lock eyes with Devon before the women turned their attention to the food.

Chapter 14: Leslie: Deville's

Leslie was very aware of how standoffish Devon was at the dinner. And she was thankful that the other women seemed to notice and let Devon be without directing too much conversation her way. She knew the meal would be awkward for her girlfriend but she hadn't anticipated such reserve. There was a part of her that was annoyed at Devon but she couldn't help but feel responsible for it too.

Once they had reached the dance club, Devon seemed to relax a bit. And she was all smiles once they had been greeted with the group of the couple's friends.

However, now Leslie felt herself shift her concerns to Allison, whom she could tell was a bit stiff despite the latter's chat and laughter with their work-related comrades.

Yes, she was very skeptical about how uncomfortable Allison would be at a lesbian club. And there was a part of her that regretted upon insisting on the limo because that meant Allison couldn't just leave if the place became overwhelming for her. But she knew Allison wouldn't do that; the latter had too much class to pull such a drama queen stunt.

Once she saw Gabby and the others convince Allison to join them on the dance floor, Leslie felt like she could finally focus her attention on her girlfriend and the friends they shared. This also meant that the serious drinking would begin.

While it was a little disappointing that her lesbian friends and her work friends didn't hang out together in the club, she wasn't at all surprised. But she would look over at her work friends to check in how they were doing and it looked like they were genuinely having fun on the dance floor. It was a different kind of fun but she felt compelled to stick with her lesbian friends for the time being even though there was a part of her that wanted to join the other group.

A few shots later and alone for once, Leslie noticed that Allison had motioned out of the next dance so she could get a sip from the drinks that had been left to the side. As Allison took her momentary break, Leslie scanned the crowds in the club and saw that were quite a few interested looks at her oblivious PIC.

With a mischievous smirk, Leslie grabbed a full beer that had been bought for her and made her way thru the crowd.

Allison noticed her coming and regarded her with a pointed look.

"Your drink looks low," Leslie remarked as she held up the beer. "Ready for number three?"

The other woman finished off her own drink with a quick swig and remarked, "This *was* my number three. So my quota has now been officially met."

Unperturbed, Leslie still held out the drink and said, "So are you saying you don't want a free beer?"

Allison stared at the bottle and took it. "I never said that... So are you having a good birthday?"

"Yes! And thank you!" Leslie declared as she fell on her in a very friendly hug, which seemed to surprise Allison but she returned the embrace with a bit of reserve.

Leslie kept her arm around her shoulders as she turned Allison to be displayed to the dance floor and crowds around it. "You know, there are quite a few women checking you out tonight!"

Allison stiffened as she looked at Leslie for a sign of a joke in her expression. "No, there aren't!"

"Yes, there are!" Leslie retorted playfully. "Between the two of us, who's the more knowledgeable one about lesbians and who they're attracted to?!"

"I think you're just trying to break my balls!" Allison scoffed as she took a swig from the bottle.

"If you doubt me so much then give me that beer back!" Leslie joked as she reached for the drink.

"No, there are no take-backs, birthday girl!" Allison playfully retorted as she pushed her back with one hand and held the drink away with the other.

"Oh, you think you can challenge me! *It's on!*" Leslie then gave a poke into Allison's sides, causing the other woman to squeak at being tickled, which stunned them both.

And that was when they realized they were face to face, with just a couple of inches between them.

"A-HEM!"

The two women jumped apart to see a narrow-eyed Gabby suddenly standing before them. She glared at the now red-faced Leslie and said, "*Red flag!*"

"Hunh?!" a bewildered Allison blurted back.

Trying to regain her composure, Leslie cleared her throat and said, "It's nothing. Private joke."

She then noticed Devon standing off to the side with a very intense frown on her face.

Leslie said to Allison, "I'm telling you those interested women are all around. You just need to look." Then she said to Gabby, "See you guys in a bit. Got a girlfriend to tend to."

She approached Devon with a bright smile and arms wide-open, as if she hadn't seen her girlfriend in years instead of minutes. "Hey, Sexy! Wanna dance?"

Instead of responding right away, Devon just stared at her with an unreadable expression.

Feeling that she needed to say *something* about what just happened with Allison, Leslie explained, "Rafferty and I were just jok-"

Devon immediately reached out and pulled her in for the deepest, passionate kiss possible.

When they finally came up for air, Leslie looked at her with a wide-eyed pant and muttered, "*Wow.*"

Panting herself, Devon whispered in her ear, "I know we weren't planning on it, but I'd love to stay over tonight so I can give you a much, much more thorough birthday present."

It was then when Leslie realized there was an up-side to Devon's jealousy after all.

She grinned at her girlfriend and said, "I am holding you to that!"

Chapter 15: Allison: Deville's & Home

Author's Note: When you have to travel and there are many pockets of time to kill, writing fanfic certainly makes the clock move faster. Good Bye, San Francisco! (Next weekend will be New York.)

Once Leslie had walked away, an overwhelming wave of self-consciousness crashed over Allison. She didn't want to look around to see if anyone was looking at her. She didn't want to give an impression that she'd be interested in dating a woman when she was straight.

"Hey, are you all right?" Gabby asked, now genuinely concerned. "You don't look well."

Clutching her beer bottle, Allison managed a weak smile and said, "I think I just need some air. I'll be back in a bit."

"All right, we'll be out there," she said as she pointed to the still dancing Erin and Trudy, who seem to be oblivious to everything that had been happening off the dance floor.

With a nod, Allison turned to make her way through the crowd and she stopped dead on her tracks to see Leslie and Devon locked in a passionate kiss.

Her heart froze and her blood chilled at the sight.

Immediately averting her eyes, she was determined to get some air and space. She forced her way through the crowds, downing the rest of her beer as she went, avoiding any eye contact as much as possible.

Once she was out on the side-walk, she was then breathing air from the smokers outside. But still, she started to feel better.

"Allison Rafferty?"

She froze at the voice from her past.

Sure enough, Brenda Billings, her old paramedic partner from Firehouse 24 was standing just a few feet away, indulging her admittedly hypocritical smoking habit for a healthcare professional. The tall stocky woman with the long blond hair looked just the same as she did the last time Allison saw her, though in jeans and a button up shirt instead of the paramedic outfit.

"Oh... hi, Billings," Allison said as she straightened up her posture. "Long time no see."

"Yeah, and in such an interesting place too," Brenda said with an open smirk. "Hey, this is Gina. My girlfriend. I guess you two have now met at last."

Allison greeted the other woman who had been standing to the side. She tried not to envision any of the contents of overheard conversations because it was just an invasive thought that her mind couldn't handle even if nothing else was going on.

Realizing she wanted to explain her presence, Allison said, "Well, I'm here to help my current paramedic partner celebrate her birthday. With her girlfriend."

Brenda then frowned curiously. "Who's your partner?"

"Leslie Shay."

All of a sudden, Brenda's face lit up with recognition. "Oh, so *she's* your new partner! Well, aren't you just lucky to be paired with another one of *us*."

Ignoring the dig, Allison was genuinely confused. "You know her? She said she didn't know you."

"Oh hell, *every* dyke first responder in Chicago knows of Leslie Shay, even if you hadn't met her. She's got a reputation for being a hot mess," Brenda explained as she took a drag of her cigarette and blew a stream of smoke into the air. "Emphasis on 'hot' and 'mess'."

Now Allison was furious at the insult. "Okay, well speaking as someone who actually knows her, I can vouch that she's a good friend and I'm glad she's my partner!"

Brenda's eyes widened slightly in surprise at the fierceness of Allison's reaction. Then she gave a nod as she put out the cigarette in the nearby ashtray. "All right, Raff, I stand corrected. It was good seeing you. And honestly, I'm glad to see you're doing okay. Let's go, Gina."

Once she was left alone again, Allison took a deep breath to calm herself down. There had been too many conflicting emotions swirling within her in the past few minutes and she needed to focus.

"—Devon being here just makes me nauseous."

Allison heard the comment from the two women sharing a cigarette nearby. She didn't look at them but she couldn't pull herself away from eavesdropping either.

"I know what you mean," the other commented. "Ever since she got back, she's been acting like her shit doesn't stink."

"It just makes me feel sorry for that girlfriend. Devon's obviously got some sort of spell over her."

The other woman gave a derisive laugh. "Yeah, that's one way to put it. - But isn't she the same girlfriend she had before she left?"

"*Is she?* Oh wow, I don't feel sorry for that stupid bitch after all. She deserves whatever she's got with Devon."

"Yeah, well, let's go. I want to leave while I still have *my* wallet. *I* at least learn my Devon lessons."

They shared a laugh as they walked away.

Stunned, Allison remained standing on the side walk, the beer buzz not feeling so welcomed after all. And she was pretty sure she didn't hallucinate any of that.

Then she noticed the twenty-four hour coffee shop across the street and decided she needed a real break from this place and its people with a fresh cup of black coffee.

Once she walked into her apartment in the pre-dawn morning, Allison finally felt all of her growing tension from the long night start to melt away. Especially when her cat, Muffin, came to greet her at the door.

After taking her solo coffee break, she had returned to the club and focused on hanging around with Gabby and the others, which helped her mood considerably. She ignored all of the other patrons in the club, not caring if she was attracting attention or not according to Leslie.

She found that she avoided looking in the direction of Leslie and Devon as much as possible. She now felt immensely uncomfortable being around the drunk and affectionate couple, a reserve that she barely hid.

She didn't know what that meant for her next work shift with Leslie but she decided to push those thoughts aside until then.

Mom had always warned her that other people's drama can suck you in if you're not careful. That's why you choose your friends based on if they're people who make healthy choices without you. Remembering that advice, she felt a little better that she had gained some clarity about why Devon bothered her so much, but it didn't help that her concerns now extended to Leslie.

Cradling and stroking her purring orange tabby in her arms, she settled on her couch for a moment to focus.

Whatever goes on between Leslie and Devon as a couple has nothing to do with her. And she shouldn't be spending her time worrying about someone else's problems when she's got enough of her own to address.

Then on impulse, she pulled out her phone and saw that she had Dr. Lucas Bradford's number on her contact list. She had entered it from their residency days and hadn't clear it out, along with her other Chicago Med contacts.

Since it was almost four in the morning, it would be too rude to call or text.

Instead, she took a chance that his personal email address was still valid and sent him a simple message: "Would you like to get a drink sometime? It doesn't have to be happy hour with the others."

Now feeling like she got some clarity of her own, Allison put the phone aside to finally call it quits for the night.

Chapter 16: Leslie: Home & Molly's

The triple chime from Devon's phone erupted in the air, causing the two women to stir in their intertwined tangle of sheets and hair.

Leslie recognized the sound as one that an actual call was coming in, instead of the alarm hours earlier that her girlfriend had kept hitting the snooze button on.

Devon reached for the phone to see who was calling and she immediately bolted up in the bed. She cleared her throat and pressed the button to answer, "Hey, Greg! - Yeah, sorry, I thought I called earlier. I'm at the mechanics. My truck didn't start this morning and he's trying to figure out why. I didn't want to call you again until I had something solid I could tell you... Yeah, I'll check with him right now. If he can't fix it in an hour, I'll take a taxi over... Sure! Thanks!.. I'll call you back in a bit."

Once she hung up, Devon collapsed back on the pillow and proclaimed, "*Fuck!* That was close!"

Blinking herself awake, Leslie asked, "So he's okay with you coming in later?"

"He said he was and I'm not going to question it. Luckily he's been a client for years. I can't afford to lose another old client since I can't solicit for new ones."

"Why not?"

Devon gave her an incredulous look. "You serious? I have an open arrest warrant for burglary on me. I can't risk a new client doing a background check, and then telling my current clients."

That comment gave Leslie a jolt awake. "Oh. I forgot about that."

"... Glad one of us could. I guess that explains why you didn't think it was a big deal about me having to sit through a dinner with cops last night. I was expecting one of them to throw me on the table and cuff me at any moment."

Leslie was now stunned as she put together the pieces of the night before. "I'm sorry, Babe... I'll talk to the guys about dropping the charges."

Now Devon looked stunned in return. "You would honestly do that?"

"Of course. It just makes sense. You're working it off. It doesn't serve a purpose..." Leslie then gave her a smile. "I'd confirm it with a kiss but we both have garbage breath right now."

Devon grinned and kissed her on the forehead anyway. "Just as well, you'd probably make me more late than I already am." She let out another yawn as she wearily stood from the bed.

Remaining stretched out on the sheets, Leslie noticed the large, yellowish and brown bruise on the back of her girlfriend's right shoulder. She frowned as she realized that she hadn't seen that when they last had sex, which was almost two weeks ago. "That bruise looks like it was pretty nasty. What happened?"

Devon froze and then twisted to make a feeble attempt to look at it, which she couldn't. "I'd almost forgotten about it. I got shitfaced drunk and fell down the stairs. Doc says it just needs to heal. No biggie."

Satisfied with the explanation, Leslie closed her eyes and let herself drift back to sleep.

"Oh, that's just bullshit, Otis!" Leslie declared as she wiped down the bar top at the moderately populated Molly's. She was trying her best to keep from genuinely lose her temper. "And you know it!"

He held up his hands in peace. "Hey! I'm all for letting bygones be bygones but I also understand not dropping the charges. I'm not really the decision maker in this situation. It's between you and Severide. You two care the most about it. I don't want to be used as leverage for you to say to him 'See, Otis agrees with me!' I'd tell him the same thing if he had asked."

She narrowed her eyes at him for a moment and then softened for a bit. "I promise I won't tell Kelly your answer no matter good or bad: Do you think I'm wrong for wanting to do this?"

"I think you're doing it out of love," he said after a gulp of beer. "It can't get more noble than that, can it?"

She thought about that for a moment and she finally said with a frown, "... What if it isn't love? I mean, I don't know if I'm in love with her. But I think she's sincere and things have been great between us this second time around. I think she's proven she deserves this."

Otis studied her. "Regardless, your heart is in the right place. I won't fault you for that."

"Thanks, guy," she said as paused, realizing that she needed to balance things out with him. "Since you were honest with me, I'll be honest with you. At my birthday dinner, Allison admitted she's interested in a doctor at Chicago Med. She knew him from her residency days. And I have upon good authority that he's been interested in her since from back then."

The blood slowly drained out of his face as stared at his drink. "Oh. Have they actually dated yet?"

Leslie shrugged. "It didn't seem like it when we talked about it. Don't know if anything has happened in the two days since then. I'll let you know if you want me to."

He said, "If I get weak and ask, let me know... So in a moment of weakness, what's he like?"

Leslie tried to reimagine him in her brain and said, "Clean cut, glasses, exudes that total 'introduce me to your mom and she'll love me.'"

"So I don't have a chance?"

"Um, he's currently got a much bigger one. And I don't mean that as any gross sexual euphemism." Leslie then added gently, "As you said, you might just need to see if this fizzles out and learn from it."

He gave a weak nod as he took another gulp of his beer.

Chapter 17: Allison: Molly's, 51 & The Rig

Allison sat on the barstool and took a sip of the rum as she continued her story, "So even though I spent the entire time mentally comparing everything he said and did to Gil, I still said 'yes' to his invite to a real date. I mean, I even compared the way they drank their beer. I'm hoping that having a dinner with a real romantic atmosphere will keep my mind from wandering like that."

"Sounds like that might be the push you need," Gabby conceded as she leaned against the bar. "I mean, there wasn't anything about him that was a real turn off, right?"

"Right. I mean, if Gil hadn't got to me first, I think I'd far more... I guess 'intrigued' would be the right word?" she said after a search. "I just feel so guilty about all of this."

"The Gil comparison?"

"Yes. And that maybe I should wait longer before trying anything romantic. As if I'm being disrespectful to Gil's memory. I can't win no matter which way I look at this."

Gabby gave her a look and then asked, "Well, do you honestly feel ready to move on? I mean, emotionally?"

Allison paused to think about it for a bit. She wanted to be as fair and honest about the situation as possible. "I don't think I'll ever stop missing him. And I do miss real intimacy. Both physical and emotional. More than what my cat can offer."

"Want another girls' night at Deville's?" Gabby suggested with a wicked grin.

Allison let out a mild groan. "That was a night that I'm happy to have only once a year. And even then that may be too frequent."

"I thought you looked a little wiped out by the end."

Intrigued to get Gabby's version of that night, Allison asked, "What about you? It was your first time there too, right?"

"Oh yeah. I had a great time! And I felt our olive branch about Devon served its purpose. So I think it was a good night all the way around."

"Good to know," she conceded.

Then Allison remembered the conversations she had with Brenda Billings and the one she overheard about Devon. "Can I ask you a question in confidence?"

Now clearly intrigued by the whiff of gossip, Gabby glanced around to make sure there were no eavesdroppers. "Sure, what's up?"

"I ran into my old paramedic partner there. She's a lesbian too. She told me that Leslie had a reputation for being a 'hot mess'. Do you know why?"

Clearly a little surprised and confused, Gabby thought about it for a moment. "Well, obvious Devon the first and second time around would contribute to that. And then there was Clarice, which didn't end well, as an understatement. Again, the first and second time."

Allison tried to put the pieces together with the few references Leslie had made in their conversations. "Was she like Devon. I mean, personality-wise?"

"Ironically, no. I'd say they're opposites, except they both completely betrayed her. And Leslie did view Clarice as the love of her life."

That comment made Allison uncomfortable but she couldn't help but be intrigued. "Do you think she's still in love with Clarice?"

"Oh, hell no," Gabby said with a shake of her head. Then she glanced around to confirm that their conversation was indeed private before telling Allison the whole story of Clarice.

Allison felt a little guilty of getting such information from an indirect source, but she sat and listened in fascination.

With her morning tea and paper, Allison sat at the common room table. Given that this would be the first time she had to interact with Leslie since the girls' night, she admittedly felt a little unsure about how the day would go. While she felt guilty getting the lowdown of Leslie's past via Gabby's gossip, the knowledge made her feel a little better about dealing with her partner again.

And then *she* walked in.

Though Leslie flashed a smile with her hello's to everyone, there was an undercurrent of stress about her that didn't seem obvious unless you were paying attention to her.

"Hey, PIC," Leslie greeted with a soft smile.

Allison paused and just took in that look of warmth and then smiled in returned. Things were going to be all right between them.

"Can I ask your objective opinion about something?" Leslie asked as they drove back to 51 from a patient drop-off at Lakeshore Hospital.

Allison suddenly felt trapped in her passenger seat, sensing that her good mood was going to come to a crashing halt at any moment. Maintaining her poker face, she responded, "What do you want to know?"

Leslie clearly paused before saying, "When Devon robbed me and the guys, we filed charges against her. I forgot she has an open warrant for her arrest that is getting in the way of her soliciting for new clients. And she's really trying to pay everyone back. And things have been really good between me and her."

"And what is your question?" Allison gently tried to clarified.

"I want to ask the guys to drop the charges against her... Well, I already asked Otis. He chickened out and said the decision is between me and Kelly."

Allison arched her eyebrow at the comment. "Chickened out"? Sounds strategic to me."

"So does that mean you're not going to give me a real opinion about the idea?"

"What does Severide think?"

"I haven't had a chance to ask him. He's either over at Erin's, or I'm out. I just know it's going to be a screaming match... And don't think I didn't notice that you didn't answer my question, PIC who is also my friend."

Allison winced at the accurate observation. Talking about Devon was the last thing she wanted. There was a part of her that envied Brian's claim of neutrality.

"Well, as your PIC, I would prefer you not doing anything that would interfere with your job duties or create a chaotic work environment."

"But as my *friend*...?"

She couldn't shake the reluctance to tell her honest opinion, whatever it was. She didn't want to think about it - *her*. Period.

The blond let out a soft sigh. "... Sorry, I shouldn't put you on the spot like that. It's not your problem. Forget I asked."

Leslie's tone of disappointment jerked Allison's attention. Her reluctance was now replaced with guilt.

She forced herself to focus before saying, "If you honestly trust her that much, then it's the right thing to do. The best thing that happens is she'll prove you right and it'll just be something that strengthens your relationship."

"And the worst?"

"She'll get into another circumstance where another warrant is issued for her... And hopefully you won't be involved that time. If you want a true worst-case scenario, then yes, you'll be the one pressing charges."

"... You still aren't telling your opinion of what I should do."

Allison took a fortifying breath as she let her real thoughts loose. "I don't know Devon the way you do. So I would tell you to not drop the charges. That isn't fair to either of you... And I don't want to give you that advice."

"Thank you for being honest..." Leslie cast her a glance and said, "By the way, any additional news on Dr. Lucas? You made up your mind about pursuing him yet?"

From one uncomfortable subject to another. She didn't feel comfortable talking about Lucas to Leslie for some reason.

Stiffening, Allison answered, "Yep. He and I already had drinks together. We're going on a real dinner date on Friday."

"Oh? So he passed the audition, did he?"

Forcing herself to sound more chipper, she replied, "Yes, he did. If he passes a couple more dates, I might even take him home to Mom."

"Is that milestone for you or her?" Leslie teased.

Allison replied with a chuckle. "If it means that Mom gives me a little space while I'm having some romantic times, I'm not going to argue."

"*That* sounds strategic," Leslie commented.

Allison thought there was a tense undercurrent to her words but she brushed it off as part of her imagination. Just overthinking again.

Chapter 18: Leslie: Home & Rafferty Home

"—Well, I'm fuckin' tired of this too!" Leslie screamed at Kelly as they stood in the living room of their shared apartment that was lit with the afternoon sun. "But don't you dare keep telling me it's for my own good! You claim she's bad news but she's been nothing but supportive and responsible. It's been several months and nothing bad has happened despite your doom and gloom foretelling!"

"*You're too close to tell the difference, Leslie!*" Kelly yelled back. "That warrant is the *only* reason why she's behaving herself!"

"It wasn't her idea to drop the charges! It was *mine!*" She immediately put up her hand to stop another retort. "And don't start talking about how manipulative she is before you go look in the mirror, Kelly! I recall it wasn't that long ago that I was lying and doing illegal things for *you* because of your damn ego! I gave *you* a second chance. I gave *Clare* a second chance. I even gave Gabby a second chance. So I am giving Devon a second chance. That's who I am! So *you're* the blind one! And if you still say 'no', then I am moving out!"

Kelly stared at her, his face still twisted with frustration and anger. He then took a deep breath to calm himself and said softly, "Fine. I trust and love *you*. You have my permission to drop the charges... I need to get some air before I change my mind. Don't bother waiting up for me."

Stunned at her victory, Leslie stood there as he grabbed his jacket and keys and walked out the door.

Minutes of silence and stillness passed before she finally smiled.

She grabbed her phone and dialed Devon's number even though she knew her girlfriend would be working late that night. Sure enough, she got voicemail.

Leslie couldn't help but sound excited as she left her message, "Hey, Babe! Great news! Kelly relented. I'll call CPD first thing tomorrow. It's probably too late in the afternoon to get anyone to work on it. But I want to celebrate so call me back when you have the chance! Good luck with your shoot!"

With this weight off her shoulders, Leslie realized she wanted to go out and spend time with someone even though it was a Thursday.

She called Gabby and got voicemail as well but she decided not to leave a message. She's probably busy with her job or with Matt.

Then she looked at Allison's name in her contact list. She paused and then pressed the call button.

With her arms full of groceries, Allison paused before the doorway of her townhouse and said, "I forgot to mention I have a cat. Muffin. Orange tabby. She tends to hide when strangers are over."

Leslie grinned as she balanced the groceries in her own arms. "Well, it'll be nice if she makes an appearance but I won't hold my breath."

"Don't get your hopes up. I'm not into forcing my child to perform on command, especially if it means I have to get down on my knees and pull her out from under the bed," she remarked as she unlocked the door and pushed it open.

"Wow!" Leslie declared as she walked in. "This is a nice place!"

"Thanks," Allison said simply as she led the two of them the spacious kitchen. "It's way too big for just one person."

"And a cat."

"Okay, two people then. Gil and I chose this place together. And it's completely paid off because he had great life insurance."

"Oh." Leslie suddenly felt that was an obvious social bomb she just tripped over.

Allison glanced at her and then added gently. "It's okay, Leslie. I don't have any angst about it. I was stating the facts."

"All right, all right!" she said as she helped to unpack the groceries.

Suddenly Leslie's cell phone chimed with an incoming call. She pulled it out and saw that it was Devon.

"Excuse me for a sec," she said to Allison, who merely nodded as she divided which items should be set aside for their dinner and those that should be put away.

Leslie turned away for a little privacy and pushed the button on her phone, "Hey, Babe! You got my message?"

"Yeah!" Devon responded enthusiastically. "That's awesome! I love you! You want to go out and celebrate now? I can be there in half an hour!"

Leslie froze as a lot of panicked thoughts started to form in her mind. Pushing them aside, she then said carefully, "I thought you'd be working late tonight?"

"Oh this is totally worth ending early! Greg would understand. I mean, not that I'm going to tell him the real reason but, well, *you* know. I can tell him something else."

"Uh, well, I assume you'd be busy so I'm already out with Gabby. And we'll probably run pretty late. How about we do something after work tomorrow?"

"All right! I'll count on it. Talk to you then. Again, *thank you!*"

"Okay, Babe, talk to tomorrow night then," Leslie said before she hung up.

Then she turned to see Allison looking at her curiously as someone who overheard her entire side of the conversation and knew it didn't make any sense whatsoever.

It was time to bite the bullet. And to get a drink of alcohol.

"It's a silly thing, really," Leslie said, trying to sound casual as she reached for one of the beer bottles they had bought for the evening. "I told Devon I was with Gabby because she doesn't like it when I talk about you."

Her PIC now frowned as she tried to make sense of what she was just told.

Leslie took a swig of beer before blurting, "She's convinced that there's *something* going on between us. Like romantically. *Insanely* convinced. Like all we have to do is look at each other in front of her and she thinks it's a sign that we're having a torrid affair."

Allison's eyes widened to pure bewilderment. "Um, *why?*"

"I have no idea why. I have told her over and over again that you and I are co-workers and friends. That's *all*. So that's why I lied just so I don't have to deal with that stupid conversation again." With her face now beet red, Leslie's guilt started twisting in different ways as she gave her an apologetic look. "I'm sorry if it sounds like you're my dirty little secret to my girlfriend. She's probably threatened because you're also the only single friend I have. And that you're attractive. To lesbians."

"I-it's all right," Allison said she was clearly trying to shift back to preparing dinner even though her frown remained as she tried to process everything. "I just... Well, thanks for letting me know. I'll continue to be your secret, I guess."

"Thanks," Leslie said weakly. Suddenly she was distracted by the sensation of something rubbing against her leg.

She looked down and saw an orange tabby looking up at her. "You must be Muffin! I was told you don't like strangers."

The cat merely looked up at her and meowed.

Leslie grinned and picked up the feline. "Don't worry, I'll be your secret too."

Hoping that was enough to change the mood, she glanced over at the other woman, who managed her own weak smile in return.

Allison then cleared her throat and asked lightly, "Ready to learn how to make eggplant lasagna from scratch?"

Chapter 19: Allison: Home

Author's Note: *If you do not know the game Jenga (as it's called in the U.S.), it would be good to at least see a picture of it before reading this chapter. It was a game Leslie and gang played in one of the CF episodes (being too lazy right now to look it up).*

Also, for the record, Muffin was not a fully original creation on my part. When Rafferty cleans out her locker in the episode "Virgin Skin", there's a picture of an orange tabby on the inside of her locker door. Since Rafferty didn't seem like the type of person to post random pictures of animals in her personal space, I took an educated guess on the significance of it.

Even though she had successfully placed the Jenga block on the top of the makeshift tower, Allison sat on the couch and watched Leslie lead Muffin around the living room rug with the fishing rod with the ball of cloth as its lure. As the home filled with the smell of the baking lasagna, she smiled deeply and commented, "Well, guess who's going to be relabeled as 'Cat Sitter' in my cell phone?"

Leslie flashed a grin from ear to ear and then glanced at the tower of wooden blocks on the coffee table. "Oh, my turn is it?"

"If you want it to be. Or you can just knock it down and throw the game so you can fully concentrate on playing with Muffin."

"And so I can be rewarded with doing the dishes, too? Who's using her child to win a stupid game? I see you're extremely competitive after all, Allison Rafferty," Leslie said as she returned to her spot on the other side of the coffee table to determine her next game move.

"You're surprised, you pot calling the kettle black?..." Perhaps it was the relaxed mood mixed with the mild alcohol buzz, Allison decided to ask the question that had been burning in the back of her mind since Devon's call. "How did you know you were a lesbian? I mean, *really* know?"

Leslie paused and arched her eyebrow provocatively at her. "I remember wanting to play doctor with the girl down the street instead of the boy next door. My choices since then always skewed that way... Why? Do you think you could have made a different decision in your past somewhere?"

Allison replied flatly, "Ha. Ha... And you've never been attracted to a man?"

"Not seriously. They can be pretty to look at but they get too close and the repulsion starts. You can probably relate to *that* part."

Allison thought about it and admitted, "Yeah, I've had my moments where guys have wanted to kiss me and I'm thinking 'please please please don't'."

"Only guys?" Leslie teased as she triumphantly pulled out a block and placed it on top.

"I've not had a woman seriously try to kiss me," Allison said as she now focused on which block to pull. She immediately shot a warning look at her. "And that wasn't an opening for you to suggest something inappropriate."

"Oh? You think women kissing each other is inappropriate?"

Not about to be baited, Allison replied simply, "You've got a jealous girlfriend. And I'm into men. And those aren't even all of the reasons. So yes, it's inappropriate."

"Well, if you want a one-time eye-opening experience of a lesbian kiss to broaden your horizons, you just have to throw the game right now."

Allison shot her a look and started to gently tapped out a block from the bottom. When it was out far enough for her to pull it free, she flashed Leslie a triumphant smirk. "You know I'm not going to throw the game for such a cheap reward, on top of having to do the dishes."

Leslie responded with a mock anger. "I'm offended that you assume my kisses are cheap!"

"Doesn't matter. This conversation means nothing because I'm not throwing the game in this one turn."

She carefully pulled out the block and then Muffin did a flying attack for it and knocked down the tower as well.

The two women stared in shock as the cat eagerly started to bat around the wooden blocks on the table.

Quickly recovering herself, Allison blushed and declared, "*That does not count!*"

Even though she was red herself, Leslie burst out laughing and grabbed the cat, "Oh yes, it does! Muffin gets the lesbian smooch!"

Allison laughed as Leslie planted a kiss on the furry forehead.

As Lucas followed her to her front door, Allison knew they were reaching the critical point of the evening. After the dinner and movie, she had felt much better about her time with him in that she forced herself to push thoughts of Gil aside whenever he came up, which became less and less as the date had progressed.

She found that she genuinely enjoyed Lucas's company, in that she liked being able to talk medicine in a way she never could with Gil. It did make her miss her passion in becoming a full-fledged doctor.

"I hope that mild smile was because of me," Lucas said as they paused before her front door.

She grinned coyly and said, "It could be. I really did have a nice time tonight, Lucas. Thank you."

"So does that mean I have a chance for another one?" he said with a slightly more intense look.

"I think so."

Then he took off his glasses.

She knew this was the sign of what was to come as he slowly leaned forward to close the gap between their faces. She forced herself to relax as she quickly contemplated the idea of kissing him.

At the last possible second before their lips touched, Leslie flashed across her mind.

Allison jerked her head in surprise and smacked her forehead against his.

They both swore in pain as they stepped back from each other.

"Oh, my god, I'm *so* sorry about that!" Allison asked, mortified and confused, as she rubbed her forehead. "Are you all right?!"

"Uh, yeah! Just caught by surprise is all," he answered in bewilderment. "Did you not want me to kiss you?!"

Allison opened her mouth and froze in response. She had no idea what to say.

She mentally forced her confusion aside and pulled him down for a kiss. It was a nice kiss that showed enough sincere affection without trying to promise more than that for the night.

When they finally parted, the two of them smiled at each other and knew nothing else needed to be said as they ended their first date.

Chapter 20: Leslie: Home, Somewhere & 51

Leslie had been in such a deep, alcohol-murky sleep when she woke to Devon already talking into her cell phone for a late night call.

"—Yeah, I get it," her girlfriend said into the phone between yawns. "Wait a sec."

Devon crawled out of the bed and locked herself in the bathroom, apparently wanting some privacy. She obviously didn't realize that in the dead of night, her voice carried very well through the door. "No – you go back to sleep," Devon's voice said. "I'll get him. Or at least make sure he calls... Yeah, thanks for calling."

A few seconds went by before Devon said, "Dad? Shannon told me you didn't come home yet and you haven't returned her calls. Please return mine. If you don't, I'm going to hunt you down before you do anything stupid. You've got five minutes to call me back. Bye!"

Seeing that the clock showed that it was 3:34 A.M., Leslie waited until Devon had sat back down on the edge of the bed and let out a weary sigh.

She yawned herself before asking, "What was that about?"

Devon stayed quiet for a minute, as if she was very reluctant to talk. She then explained, "That was Shannon. She and Dad had a fight and he stormed out and she realized he hasn't come back yet. He probably went out drinking somewhere but all of his regular places should be closed by now. So I need to find him. I've got more ideas of where he could be than she does... I need at least half a bottle of aspirin before driving."

"Do you want me to go with you?"

"... No, he does this all the time. It's not your problem."

"You're my girlfriend. Yes, it is. Otherwise I'm going to lie here wide awake with worry until you call me that you've found him. So I might as well be with you when you do. I don't have to work tomorrow. Plus, you could probably use the company while you search."

In the darkness, she could feel Devon looking down at her. Then her girlfriend leaned down and gave her a tender kiss. "All right, girl scout, let's go."

Yawning yet again, Leslie sat in the cab of the beaten up truck under the glow of the street lamp. At least this time, Devon had been let inside the house, instead of being turned away at the home of one more of her dad's new friends that she didn't have a phone number for.

With the dawn light changing the color of the sky, Leslie was about to let herself nod off when Devon finally appeared with a cell phone to her ear. She blinked and stretched her arms before stepping out of the truck with her hand held out expectantly.

As she walked forward, Devon looked confused as she hung up the phone. "What?"

"He's in there and he's okay, right? So give me the keys. I'll drive us back to my place so you can get some sleep."

Her girlfriend blinked numbly for a moment. She then fished out her keys from her pocket and said, "Sure."

Leslie sat down at the common room table and didn't bother to hide the fact that she was staring at the discolored blotch of skin on Allison's forehead.

Otis and Cruz sat nearby and greeted her with a smile and a nod towards her PIC. Showing that they were just as curious but didn't have the balls to ask.

As if she could feel her stare, Allison merely gave her a mild glare over the edge of her newspaper before returning back to reading.

Leslie knew that was a warning look to not utter any of the ten million smartass comments crossing her mind. Not that she was the slightest bit intimidated.

"So, your first date got a little too frisky?" Leslie remarked with a barely contained grin.

Allison didn't look up from her paper and said, "I'm ignoring you."

Otis looked up from his bowl of cereal. Cruz looked up curiously too.

Wincing at Otis's sudden interest, Leslie gave him a mild look.

He cleared his throat and declared heartily, "Raff, you went a date? 'Bout time you joined our rumor mill!"

Allison let out a sigh and dropped the paper to give them her full attention. "Yes, I went out on a date. It was with a doctor at Chicago Med. We will have another one next weekend. Nothing else to report."

Cruz frowned curiously. "So wait. If you're dating now, does that mean you don't want to go to the Fire Academy Dinner? We've still got time to cancel your RSVP."

Leslie felt herself suddenly tense at the thought as she looked at Allison expectantly.

The other woman looked right at her for a moment. Then she said to everyone, "I'll still go. I've only gone on one and a half dates with the man. He's not my boyfriend."

Otis clearly looked relieved but tried to hide it.

Leslie felt relieved too but she had a better poker face. Probably something she learned from Allison.

Cruz still frowned. "Wait, what counts as 'half a date?' Is that another way of saying 'second base'?"

Leslie rolled her eyes and laughed. "You're such a *straight dude*, Cruz!"

Otis then hesitantly raised his hand. "I have the same question."

Allison looked at all of them and then went back to her paper before stating, "I'll let your varied imaginations go wild. *That* part of myself does not get added to the rumor mill."

Leslie knew exactly what to say in response. "Go ahead and let us lowly mortals feed the rumor mill with the best our imaginations can come up with. You'll be a *very* popular woman around here. Being *all* hetero *and* unboyfriended."

Otis and Cruz was clearly on Leslie's wavelength as they all shared an evil smirk and high-five.

Allison gave her a glare harsher than the one for the bruise on her forehead.

In return, Leslie raised her eyebrow provocatively at Allison as a challenge.

Her PIC now narrowed her eyes at her but kept her mouth shut.

Playing her next card, Leslie then declared, "You're no fun! You're going to be *boring* on a group date. We should go without you! I can get Devon to go instead. I'm sure I can get her into a fancy, sexy dress for the open bar."

Otis and Cruz immediately looked horrified at the thought but knew better than to say anything.

Allison rolled her eyes and finally declared, "*All right!* 'Meeting for drinks' is half a date. No physical contact. No groping. Nothing to mark on my belt of sexual conquests! And the bruise was an accident. Absolutely nothing sexy about *that!* I had a splitting headache the next day because of it." Without another word, she buried herself in her paper.

The men let out a sigh of relief as Leslie just danced in her seat in triumph.

Chapter 21: Allison: Chicago Med 2

Allison knew she was overthinking but she couldn't help it. And once she realized that, she let the thoughts flood her mind.

As she filled out the clipboard with the forms for the latest patient they had dropped off at Chicago Med, Allison stiffened when she realized that Leslie had stood so close behind her so that she could read over her shoulder. She knew the other woman did it over a hundred times before but this was the first time that she really, *really* noticed.

While she was glad that Lucas didn't stay over after that first kiss, it meant she spent the rest of the night lying in bed and stroking Muffin who was stretched out along her torso. She stared up at the darkness and tried to understand why the thought of Leslie came up at *that* moment.

Coming from a family of doctors and nurses, she knew about the concerns of patients falling for a care-giver. What she was also warned about was the danger of mistaking the need to save someone as feelings of love and affection.

And she couldn't deny that need to be a savior in the back of her mind whenever she thinks of Leslie... Or more precisely: Leslie with Devon.

But as she continued to overthink, she knew her whole situation with Leslie was more than that. Much, much more.

When she had submitted her request for that first transfer from Firehouse 24 to 51, her chief had subtly tried to warn her that her new partner Leslie Shay was openly lesbian too. Now while Allison never lodged a formal complaint about her then partner Brenda Billings's lack of discretion, she did come to him for advice about it and they agreed a quiet transfer would be the best option. They never imagined that the first viable opening could possibly put her right back in the situation she had been trying to leave.

Since the transfer to 51 would be a promotion and a new social environment, Allison pursued it anyway, feeling confident that she could use her experiences with Billings to manage her exposure to Leslie Shay.

While Billings was arrogant, obnoxious and was a stereotype of a female jock, Allison wasn't prepared for Leslie's sincerity, warmth, and humor. But even before knowing about those traits, she was struck by the woman's physical beauty upon sight, something she wasn't expecting and defied her ingrained assumptions about lesbians. She found out she wasn't prepared to deal with Leslie Shay at all.

And after spending only a few hours into this latest shift, Allison caught herself doing things that she probably did hundreds of times before and just never noticed. Like staring at Leslie's lips. Taking a glance at the back of her neck. Locking eyes for just a second too long.

Leslie never acted or reacted like she noticed any of it.

Allison certainly didn't regard Lucas with longing looks during their date. And truth be told, her moments of adoring Gil were early in their dating days. Yet her flirtation with Gil evolved into something very stable and solid. It was only the damned Hodgkin's that ruined everything.

And even if – really, really big 'if' – she could accept the idea of getting involved with a woman, there was nothing about Leslie that had a possibility of a future together. Absolutely nothing.

Allison had been shocked when Gabby told her the story of Leslie and Clarice. That Leslie didn't always have the lifestyle of drunk party chick that only lived in the moment. That Leslie at one time wanted a stable, quiet life, with children, even to the point of trying to have a child with Severide. If Gabby had never told Allison any of that, she would never have guessed.

Now she had spent the last five hours being hyper-aware of the other woman. Trying to minimize anything and everything that seemed even remotely inappropriate and dangerous.

So when she realized Leslie stood right behind her, Allison casually took a step away and turned to hand her the clipboard. "Everything look right?"

Apparently not noticing the strategic shift in positions and increase of space, the other woman took the forms and looked them over. "Yep, everything looks good."

"Oh, you two are here!" Dr. Kendra declared from across the ER.

After greeting Leslie with a hug, the doctor then grinned excitedly at Allison. "*You're* actually the woman I wanted to see!"

Allison frowned in confusion and responded, "I am?"

"Yes indeed!" she pulled out a notepad and scribbled something on the paper. "Bradford told me that you're interested in returning to the residency program."

That comment surprised Allison, but she didn't want to admit that to a woman who was his superior. Maintaining a friendly composure, she responded, "Well, we did talk the other night about the residency days and how I missed the life of being a budding doctor on occasion."

"Definitely glad to hear it. We're currently accepting applications for the next group that will start in the Fall. If you apply, I will personally babysit your application through the process that I can *guarantee* you'll be accepted back in. Here's the website. The same you used before. Once you submit, send me an email and I'll keep an eye out. – I've got to go, but if you have any questions, call me. Even if it's in the middle of the night. We would love to have you back, Dr. Rafferty!" Kendra handed her the paper of scribbled information before glancing at her watch. "I've got to go to my next appointment. See you, ladies!"

As the other woman left them, Allison gripped the paper in stunned silence. There was a part of her that felt a tiny glimmer of relief and hope. To a lifestyle that was free of this unfamiliar and threatening mental and emotional drama. And it would be good to be a doctor again.

Then she looked at Leslie, who had the expression of someone who had just been punched in the gut.

Her partner clearly forced a smile and said, "That sounds great! - Um, ready to go?"

Allison opened her mouth to speak, wanting to say that this wasn't really her idea.

Yet instead, she dropped her gaze and nodded. "Yeah, let's go."

Chapter 22: Leslie: Chicago Med, Lakeshore & Devon's

After overhearing that conversation between Allison and Kendra, Leslie was completely numb as she started the ambulance. Allison was her friend and this was great news.

It was such an obvious subject but Leslie didn't want to talk about it. She didn't like it, not at all. But she felt guilty that she didn't. Yet she couldn't formulate any reason why. She probably could if she allowed herself to really think about it. To talk about it. But she didn't want to.

She glanced to see that Allison was indeed buckled in before steering out of their spot. Out of the corner of her eye, she watched Allison glance at the hand-written note before folding it up and tucking it away in her jacket pocket.

The silence that settled between them was both comforting and awkward.

The awkward part really got to Leslie even before they left the parking lot.

She cleared her throat and tried to sound chipper as she said, "So if – *when* – you go back to Chicago Med, that means Lucas will be your co-worker. Will you still date him? Or is it an acceptable loophole if you were already dating when you return?"

Allison was quiet for a moment and answered, "Yeah, you're right about that. Well, I guess I should give him the benefit of the doubt. I'm embarrassed to admit that he apparently has my future in mind more than I do. That's a rare quality in a straight man."

Leslie felt her heart tighten at the comment.

"Ambulance 61!" the voice crackled from the radio. "You available for a patient pick up? There's a six car pile-up that needs support."

As Allison responded to the call, Leslie let out a deep sigh of relief at the welcomed change in subject and attention.

The two women didn't speak while their siren wail above them as Leslie steered through the parting traffic.

Suddenly, her cell phone in her pocket suddenly chimed with Devon's ringtone.

Leslie didn't dare take her main attention off of driving as she was struck by the unexpected call. "That's Devon. Why is she calling me at this time?"

"Do you want me to answer it for you?" Allison asked.

"Um, no," she answered as she turned down the target road. "I'll let it go to voicemail. It can't be that urgent."

With blood covering her uniform, Leslie leaned wearily against the counter of the emergency room at Lakeshore Hospital, glad for the first real break after hours of panic and stress. She glanced over to see Allison busily filling out the forms for their latest drop-off, her grim face reflecting their mutual disappointment at not being able to deliver a living patient.

Instinctively, Leslie walked over and stood behind the woman so she could peer over her shoulder in curiosity. She definitely didn't need to oversee Allison's work but there was a certain comfort she received upon doing this, just having the woman nearby.

She sensed her PIC stiffen slightly as she stepped away and turned to her. Allison forced a sad smile. "It's almost quitting time. Ready to go?"

"Yep," Leslie said.

Her phone suddenly chimed with Devon's ringtone again, reminding her that there was a voicemail she hadn't yet checked.

She whipped out the phone to answer the call. "Hey, Babe, what's up?"

"Uh – I'm just calling to let you know everything's fine," Devon answered, sounding a little surprised herself. "You can delete the voicemail I left earlier."

"All right," Leslie said. "Did you want to get together? We're heading back to the firehouse now and I'll be free once I shower and change out."

"No, sorry not tonight, Babe. I had a really long day. And I just got a new assignment that will keep me busy for the next week. At least."

"Bye, Honey. Good luck!" Leslie said before ending the call. She couldn't help but frown at the entire situation, the call and the previous call.

Okay, that was odd. Like *really* odd.

"What's wrong?" Allison asked, her expression showing that she was genuinely concerned.

Holding up her hand to get a moment, Leslie checked that she did indeed have a voicemail waiting from the earlier call attempt. Her curiosity taking over, she dialed the number to retrieve the voicemail.

Allison turned to deal with the hospital staff so that Leslie now had some privacy.

Leslie's eyes widened at the booming voice of Devon's dad. "Hey, Leslie! *Where is that fuckin' cunt of a daughter of mine?! Tell her she better return my – my stuff NOW!*" He clearly had the slur of someone who was not fully sober.

She stared at her now silent cell phone. She murmured, "*What the hell?!!*"

Allison came back. "Okay, Leslie, what is wrong? That is not a good expression."

Still stunned, Leslie opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out.

"Leslie!" her PIC barked in a commanding voice.

It snapped her back into action. "It-it's Devon. Something's up. And she's trying to pretend there isn't."

With the coolness of a seasoned healthcare professional, Allison responded immediately, "Let's get back to 51 and change out. I'll drive you over to her place. All right?"

Leslie numbly nodded as the two women proceeded to make their exit.

"Well, everything *looks* quiet," Leslie said as they pulled up into the driveway of Devon's home. "Her truck's here. And so is her dad's motorcycle."

"Hmmm," Allison responded dryly as she pulled her car to a stop and turned it off.

The women were still wearing their blood-stained work clothes since they mutually decided time used for driving was more important than for cleaning up.

Leslie gripped her cell phone and thought about making another call attempt to Devon. But her girlfriend didn't answer the other calls, and she doubted that would change now that they were outside her home.

"Okay, give me a moment," she said as she undid her seatbelt.

Allison undid her own. "No, I'm going with you."

Leslie froze. "I don't know if that's a good idea."

"This isn't your choice," Allison said with definite firmness that did not sound like there was any room for argument.

"Um, okay," she said, trying to ignore the new spike in her barely subdued sense of panic. "But stand behind me, all right?"

"Of course."

Moments later they were standing at the front door and Leslie pressed the doorbell.

No response for a moment.

Leslie pushed again. And again. She finally pounded on the door and yelled through it, "*Devon!* It's me! Answer the door!"

Finally the door flew open and Devon stood on the other side. She looked haggard, which was nothing compared to the large and bloody bruise on the upper right side of her face.

Any shock Leslie had was immediately overshadowed by Devon's glare at Allison. "What the hell is *she* doing here?!"

"What the hell happened to *your* face?!" Leslie blurted back. "Was that your dad?"

"*Get her out of here!*" Devon yelled at her girlfriend. "Are you trying to make my humiliation worse?!"

Trying to maintain a sense of control, Leslie said to Allison, "Look, why don't you just go? Thanks for the drop-off."

Allison narrowed her eyes at her and said firmly, "No, if *you're* staying then *I'm* staying."

"*What the hell?!*" Devon now yelled at Allison, taking a threatening step forward. "You're not her girlfriend!"

"No, I'm not her girlfriend!" Allison retorted and instantly stepped forward herself, which caused Leslie to move herself between them. "But at least *I'm* worried about her safety. And right now nothing about this situation that seems safe for her!"

Angry tears formed in Devon's eyes, as she said, "There's no danger, you self-righteous bitch! My dad's already been arrested and taken away!"

Leslie knew her inaction had to stop before things went too far. She forced her tone to be as gentle and calming as possible. "Allison, I'll be fine. Please go. I need to make sure Devon's injury is fine because I'm very sure she hasn't had it looked at it yet. I promise I'll call you later."

Allison stared at her for the longest moment before she turned to Devon and said, "You *better* think about *her* for a change, you selfish bitch!"

Leslie instinctively moved to block Devon from lunging at the angrily departing woman. Though there was a part of her less worried about protecting Allison that preventing what would probably be a brutal fist fight on the drive way.

Not waiting to see Allison get into her car, Leslie ushered Devon inside, where her Dad's girlfriend Shannon had been sitting in the living room with an open beer can and a box of tissue for her tears.

"Hey, Shannon," Leslie greeted grimly.

The woman nodded, clearly emotionally numb for the earlier events.

Leslie then looked at Devon and motioned to the kitchen table. "Sit down. Was I right that you didn't have anyone look at your face? Like a real medical professional?"

Devon nodded and sat down as instructed.

Leslie pulled out the penlight from her pocket and did an examination. "That's more than just a bump. You need to be checked in for observation. Give me your keys. I'm going to drive you to the ER."

"I don't have insurance."

Her girlfriend shouldn't have been surprised but this was not a time for any of that.

Leslie swallowed and then said, "All right. Then I'm going to stay overnight to watch over you. But the minute you show any signs of a serious concussion, I'm driving you in personally. And we'll work out the finances then. Once you're out of the critical observation period, I'm taking a taxi home. And then when things have really settled, we'll talk. *Seriously* talk."

Like a punished child, Devon bowed her and nodded.

Chapter 23: Allison: Home 2

Showered and dressed in a bathrobe, Allison sat at her desk and stared at the hand-written note she had laid out before her. She absently pet Muffin, who was curled up and purring on her lap.

There was absolutely no reason why she shouldn't apply. She thought about it from every angle and she couldn't come up with a single reason not to apply.

She then stared at the cell phone she had also placed on the desk before her. It had been at least two hours and Leslie still hadn't called her.

She hadn't had dinner yet. She didn't return to the novel she had been reading. She didn't turn on the television or the computer. She just spent two hours in a perpetual state of wait and worry. The last time she remembered feeling like this was when she was waiting for Gil to call her after their first date.

But this time was a no-win situation, and the stakes were much higher and much more dangerous. It was absolutely fucked-up and she knew it.

Just then, Muffin stretched and yawned. She then looked up at her mom and then climbed up on the desk and sat and stared at her.

Allison stared back and then rubbed the furry ears. "You're right, sweetie. I always say that doing *something* is better than nothing."

Then she reached out and pushed the on button for her computer.

Her phone then buzzed and lit up with Leslie's name. In a flash she picked it up and pressed the button. She greeted anxiously, "Hi. How'd it go?"

"Hi," Leslie said, her tone very drained. "I'm still here. It got a little more complicated but I think the drama's over. I have to stay to keep an eye on her, to make sure she doesn't have a real concussion."

Allison frowned at those words. "...Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I wish, but no. It's just been a crappy day for both of us... Well, not *completely* crappy for you. Did you submit your application yet?" Leslie was trying to sound chipper even though she clearly didn't have the energy for it.

"I was about to," she answered honestly. This topic made her feel uncomfortable and awkward again. But she couldn't deny the tiniest thrill of the other woman noting what should be good news for her. "Well, if anything comes up, don't hesitate to call."

"Nothing should. I'll see you next shift. Night."

Feeling her stomach tighten even more, Allison responded, "Yeah, good night."

With her phone now silent, she put it down on the desk again and saw that Muffin had been staring at her, with just a tail twitch as a response.

That phone call only made her more worried, more frustrated and more helpless. This *has* to stop.

Her computer screen now lit up and waiting. So she opened a browser and started to type in the URL that Kendra had scribbled on the paper.

Her phone buzzed again. This time it was Lucas. She stared at it for a moment, watching it light up and shake with the pending call.

Muffin apparently found it annoying and jumped down from the desk to go somewhere else in the townhome.

She picked up the phone and answered it, forcing a pleasant tone. "Hey, Bradford. What's up?"

"Bradford?" he retorted with a laugh in his tone. "We're still on a last name basis after our first kiss and matching forehead hickeys?"

It wasn't his fault that things went south the last half of the day. She forced herself to be more pleasant and it actually felt a little real. "Sorry, Mr. *Lucas*. To what do I owe the pleasure?"

He chuckled. "Kendra told me that she saw you today and you took info about the residency program again."

"Yeah, I did. I was just about to take a look at the website."

"Great!" he said brightly.

It was very nice to talk to someone who was completely removed from the drama of the few hours ago. She could use more company of that sort.

"Are you open to hanging out tonight?" she asked.

He gulped and blurted. "Su-sure! Have you had anything to eat?"

"No, I haven't. I was going to toss together some pasta."

"Hey, relax, Ms. *Allison*. I'll pick up some Chinese food and head over. Any preference?"

She smiled at his eagerness. "Something with noodles and veggies. Chinese pasta. See you in a bit."

After yet another shared memory of a screw up from their residency days, Allison and Lucas sat at her dining room table and laughed over a bottle of wine.

It was the best she had felt all day. And probably longer than that if she really thought about it.

Being with Lucas was so incredibly easy. No emotional mazes, no worry of drama exploding the next moment, and no wondering what to do next that wasn't normal.

She needed this. And more.

"You're staring. What is it?" he asked. "Should I be concerned that you claim to have a cat and I haven't seen it yet? Other than in framed photos."

He may not look anything like Gil. But Lucas is an attractive man.

She took a sip of wine and asked, "Do you have to work tomorrow morning?"

He grinned as he correctly sensed where this was headed. "I do. But what if I didn't?"

"I was going to ask if you were willing to stay over tonight. It's an offer for physical intimacy. Completely selfish on my part."

"it's not selfish if we both get something out of it," he replied with an unwavering grin. "So what if I say that I'm willing to take the responsibility for an early morning if you still extend the offer?"

Returning his grin, Allison finished off her glass of wine and stood from her chair. She stepped over to him and planted a passionate kiss that was returned just as eagerly.

Feeling a paw jabbing her in the face, Allison blinked awake to the dawn light with Muffin doing her best to show that she wanted to be fed.

Stretching her bare limbs in the layer of sheets and blankets, she then remembered that Lucas had joined her the night before. She sat up to look around and listen to see if he was still around.

"Lucas?"

Silence.

Muffin meowed and rubbed against her.

"All right, sweetie. You've made your point. I'm getting up."

Allison let out a yawn as she stood greeted the day with a self-satisfied smile that had been missing for a long time.

Chapter 24: Leslie: Devon's and Shayveride's

Wearing one of Devon's t-shirts and underwear, Leslie curled up in the chair in the corner of the bedroom and continued to surf on her cell phone. It was early morning and she had managed a few minutes of sleep here and there but otherwise, she had been up all night, occasionally glancing up when she saw Devon's stir in the bed.

"You look like shit," Devon commented groggily from the bed. "Hot shit, but still like shit."

"Look in the mirror, Babe," Leslie commented back through a yawn. "How are you feeling?"

"Like I look. You still here to observe me?"

"Yep," Leslie said as she got up and grabbed her pen light to once again check her pupils.

"You're looking good."

"So are you," Devon said with a distinctly lecherous tone. "T-shirt and panties are always a sexy combo."

Leslie froze and then looked at her seriously. "We can have the real talk now or later. I'm not going to pretend that things are fine anymore. It's way beyond white lies and cover-ups."

"Babe, did you sleep at all last night? You really look like you needed it. You can crash here," Devon said as she pat the empty space next to her on the bed.

Leslie swallowed a sigh. She finally said, "I'm going to go get my clothes out of the dryer and call for a taxi-cab. Then I'm going home and sleep off the past day and a half. And then we're going to talk after that where you will answer *all* of my questions. Devon, we've reached a stopping point. I feel like I don't have anything else to give and I need you to convince me otherwise."

Her girlfriend nodded, barely hiding her own concerned expression.

"... So the deal he cut with the D.A. in Texas to give information on the chop shop ring he worked for," Devon explained as the two of them sat at the counter of the apartment Leslie shared with the currently absent Kelly. "I guess old habits die hard. He started to make chop shop contacts here in Chicago. Then last night I discovered he had some guns that had been hiding in the garage. He *never* had guns before. So I hid them and it didn't help that he was a drinking binge when he found out. And that's when the shit hit the fan"

As she absorbed this, Leslie stared at her open bottle of beer but she didn't feel thirsty as she mulled over what she had just been told. "So that bruise that was on your back. Was that your dad too? You were just waiting for it to heal before spending time with me again so I would never find out?"

Devon gave a weak nod. "He just gets mean sometimes when he drinks. Most of the time *nothing* happens... He's my old man, Leslie. I can't walk away. Luckily he wasn't busted for the chop-shop connections or the guns but he's still got a record and the DA in Texas will find out, if he hasn't already."

Her interest in the beer now completely lost, Leslie pushed the bottle aside. She rubbed her forehead and looked at the other woman. "Devon, I am now genuinely afraid that the next time is going to be a point of no return for *someone*."

"That thought crosses my mind *all* the time," she admitted softly. "At least having him in jail means it can't get any worse while he's in there. I hope."

Leslie couldn't deny the fact that she felt numb. There was no emotional reaction in this conversation. No passion. No anger. No worry.

"Babe," a scared Devon looked at her hopefully, "please say something."

Leslie stared back and only to feel stuck.

She wanted to say something. But the words that were forming were definitely not what she wanted to say to her.

Well, perhaps this *was* the point of no return.

"Devon," she began carefully with the one thing that she could know she could say, "you were right to be threatened by Allison. She's a doctor, wants kids, and is hot. She's the ultimate lesbian fantasy. And the *only* reason why I didn't drop you like a rock when she came back into my life is because she has absolutely no interest in women whatsoever. So maybe you saw that small attraction that I have – had - *have* for her.

"But even with all that, and our history, just you and me, *you* treated me like I was untrustworthy person in this relationship. Like my attraction to someone completely unattainable outweighs burglary, arrests, and beatings. And I still felt so bad that I lied to you about hanging out with her when it was just completely innocent. Our relationship is absolutely fucked-up. And I don't see it getting any better."

As tears started to form in her eyes, a panicked Devon said, "Leslie, Baby, I'm sorry! I'll never accuse you of doing anything with Allison again. I mean, I was *wrong!* You're the best thing that's *ever* happened to me!"

Leslie looked at her for a long time and finally said, "Devon, I can't say the same to you."

The other woman struggled to think as she cried.

As she started to cry herself, Leslie said, "I can be your *friend*, Devon. I just can't be your *girlfriend* anymore. I've reached my limit – I have nothing else to give and all I see are feelings of fear and worried and anger. But as a friend, I can get you in contact with Detective Lindsay and maybe she can help your dad out. I can be there to talk to on the phone and maybe give you some objective advice. That's all I have left to give."

Shaking her head, Devon tried to wipe away tears that kept coming. "Leslie, I don't want you as just a friend. Not after everything we've been through."

"Then it sounds like we're through."

The women couldn't look at each other in the long silence between them.

Devon quietly gathered her belongings and left.

Sniffing, Leslie reached for the beer bottle as she thought that it looked extremely good but then she paused.

She didn't want to spend another night just being... pathetic.

She went over to the sink and splashed water on her face. Then she picked up her phone and initiated the call to the first person she wanted to speak to.

"Hi," Allison responded, reserved concern in her tone. "How is she?"

Leslie smiled at the sound of her voice but then she answered softly, "Probably not so good. I just broke up with her. Are you available to hang out? Even if it's just for a little bit? I-I just don't want to be alone right now."

"...Of course. Are you at home? I'll come over."

"Can we go to your place? I don't want to be here when Kelly gets back."

"Sure. Expect me in twenty then."

When their call ended, Leslie then looked up Erin's work contact info and sent it to Devon via text.

No response.

She took a deep breath and waited for Allison to arrive.

Chapter 25: Allison: Home & Restaurant

Sitting on the couch with a plate of a half-eaten slice of blueberry pie, Allison was genuinely stunned and didn't bother to hide it. "You didn't tell anyone else yet?"

"Nope," Leslie said as she fished for Muffin along the rug. "That's why I wanted to hang out with you first. You're the only person who doesn't make me feel like a complete idiot about her."

"You can't fool me, Leslie Shay. You claim you want to hang out with *me* but it's really with *Muffin*," the other woman remarked dryly. "I have to make sure you don't sneak her out when I take you home."

"And how are you going to prevent that?" Leslie said with absolutely no repentance. "Pat me down when I leave your car?"

Unprovoked, she retorted, "If I have to. Isn't that what lesbians do? Kidnap cats?"

"Only if they're as cute as this one. Right, Muffin?"

The cat was currently far more interested in chasing the cloth lure.

Leslie frowned and said, "Well, she's busy right now."

Allison watched for a moment and then asked, "So are you really all right about the split?"

"... Lately, she would tell me she loved me," she admitted. "But I would purposefully ignore it. Like it just didn't happen. I didn't want to deal with it. To acknowledge it in some way, like saying it back."

"Even if you don't mean it?" Allison asked pointedly.

Leslie gave her a look. "Well, I never said it *back* to her. I should have taken that as an omen the first time it happened. Instead of just silently freaking out about and tried to pretend she never uttered those words... I envy how simple a cat's life can be."

"That fur ball's spoiled, and I'm not about to change that... If you would like to spend more time with her, you can spend the night if you want."

Leslie looked at her with an arched eyebrow. "And you're offering me to sleep *where*?"

Refusing yet again to be baited, Allison shook her head. "I do have a guest room. Actually two that you can choose from... Unless you want to sleep somewhere else, like this couch. My bed is off-limits."

Stretching out to lie on the floor, Leslie then picked up the now attentive Muffin. "Okay, I'm interested, but we have work tomorrow."

Now her PIC was confused at what should have been an obviously practical solution. "Well, we can carpool since we work together. Are you afraid everyone will think you dumped Devon for me?"

Leslie turned completely red at the comment as clearly inappropriate thoughts crossed her mind.

Which then made Allison return despite herself. That comment definitely sounded more provocative than she meant.

They both shared a nervous giggle as they tried to let the awkwardness pass.

To get the atmosphere back to neutral, Allison cleared her throat and nodded towards the cat. "She's such a fussy cat yet she just adores you. You must give off 'feline-sucker' on an some level only cats can sense."

Apparently glad for the shift, Leslie gave the cat some extra rubbing, which was definitely appreciated. "I am absolutely content with being a sucker for pussy... *cats*." She then flashed Allison an unrepentant wink.

Turning red again, Allison tried to get back under control. "When Lucas was here, she definitely hid. I think she stayed away until morning, waiting until he left and she was hungry."

Leslie then froze as the mental wheels in her brain were clearly turning. "So he stayed the night?"

Allison hadn't meant to say that but accepted that it was now out in the open. "Yesss, he did," she said as she shoved a big forkful of pie into her mouth.

"Oh wow," Leslie said with a sly grin. "So did he rock your world?"

Now Allison felt herself blush from head to toe. "I'd been celibate for a while."

Leslie didn't let that slide. "Okay, that sounded like he was fantastic or that you were desperate."

"Or it could have been *both*... I'm not sleeping with you so you don't get the details, remember?"

Her friend just rolled her eyes. "Wow, no wonder you don't have many women friends. You suck at girl-bonding."

"Okay, you know I don't have to let you sleep over tonight. Muffin is not going to care if you're here or not."

As if on cue, her furry child then stretched out on Leslie's stomach and looked like she wasn't going anywhere on her own.

Allison narrowed her eyes at the betrayal.

Muffin only yawned in returned.

Momentarily alone at the restaurant table, Allison sipped her coffee and briefly scanned the other patrons in the busy establishment. It was Saturday night and almost every table were filled with couples, many of them as just a single pair while others were multiple sets of pairs. Each table had their own dynamic, whether it was intense intimacy or jovial interaction, or somewhere in between.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Lucas return to the table, putting his cell phone back in his pocket.

"Sorry about that," he said sincerely.

"You're a doctor, it comes with the territory."

"I bet this is one part of the doctor life that you haven't missed. It must be nice to take care of people but not get invested in them."

"What do you mean?" she asked, not sure exactly what he was alluding to.

"Well, I meant being a paramedic. You're there for the initial crisis, do what you can, and then move on. The emotional investment isn't there compared to taking care of someone over weeks or months or even years."

She suddenly felt defensive even though she knew he didn't mean to be insulting or rude. "Everyone has a part to play. And there calls we go out on that stay with you for quite a while. Being a paramedic for the past year has given me an appreciation for the job that I definitely didn't have before."

"Yes, but you're a doctor at heart, Allison. I've seen you in action and you're great! An inspiration to a lot of us who were in our group. You would have eventually wanted something much more than being a paramedic."

Forcing her guard to lower, she shrugged. "Maybe you're right. I would have eventually wanted to put on the white coat again, but I don't feel like I'm twiddling my thumbs in the meantime."

Apparently realizing that the conversation was not maintaining the light romantic tone of a date, Lucas added hastily, "I never said that. I think it's great that you've found a way to use your med skills and knowledge until then. And now that you'll be rejoining the program, you'll get back on track."

"I haven't submitted my application yet."

"Well, it's pretty much the same one you submitted the first time around, right? And with Kendra babysitting it and the work experience as a paramedic to add to it, you're a shoo in."

Allison felt a certain sense of rebellion stir within her as she looked him in the eye. "Lucas, what if I don't want to be a doctor again? What if I'm happy just being a paramedic or even something outside of the medical field completely? Would you lose interest in me?"

He blinked in surprise as he carefully thought of how to respond. "Not at all. But I would be disappointed because I know you're capable of so much more than that. You have it in you to help people the best you can. I've seen it too many times to know it isn't a fluke... I mean, I would be *more* than disappointed. I would be *surprised* because I never had the impression you would settle for anything less. And shouldn't a man feel that way about a woman he really cares about?"

Something in Allison stirred as his words reminded her a little of Gil. Of how he used to just make it his point to support her no matter what, even to the point of jeopardizing his own health. It was so nice to have someone think about her like that again.

Then she thought about Leslie's fiasco with Devon and knew it could always be worse. Much, much worse.

She smiled at him and said, "Ready to go?"

Chapter 26: Leslie: Chicago Med & Molly's

In the Chicago Med ER, Leslie leaned against the counter and watched Allison fill out the forms for the latest patient drop-off.

"What?" her PIC asked without looking up or pausing in her scribbles. "You can't tell if I'm filling out the paperwork wrong from over there."

"You seem relaxed. Which is nice since we're *here*."

Stiffening, Allison's face blanked as she suddenly became aware of what the other woman noticed. She then smirked and said, "You're right. I guess that's the sign that I've... well, that's good. Thanks for pointing it out."

Leslie grinned from ear to ear in return.

"Done," Allison said as she handed the paperwork over to the waiting nurse. "Ready to go?"

Leslie held up the car keys with a jingle. "Ready."

The paramedic team had taken two steps towards the exit when a male voice shouted, "Allison!"

Leslie instantly felt a sense of dread at Lucas's voice and she didn't want to turn around but Allison had already responded.

"Hey, Honey!" he greeted as he rushed up and gave Allison a kiss on the lips.

Allison blushed and blinked, but kissed him back with a smile. "Lucas! I didn't know you were nearby."

"I've got spies in ER now. They let me know when you're here!" he explained with a grin. "I was hoping you'd make a point of coming up to see me before you leave."

"Oh, yeah," Allison said, clearly surprised by what was an obvious comment. "Lucas, you remember Leslie?"

Her partner forced a smile and extended a hand.

"Of course!" he said, heartily shaking her hand. "I've really got to meet more of Allison's co-workers and friends. She's told me so much that I have to put other faces to names now."

Allison's face suddenly lit up with an idea. "We're having a birthday party for our chief at Molly's tomorrow night. You should stop by and meet everyone at once."

"What? Me just stop by *alone*?" he said with mocked horror. "How about we show up together? Date number five?"

Four and a half, Leslie thought to herself. *But who's counting?*

"Sounds good," Allison said. "I'll call you later with details."

"Sure – Oh hey, Kendra said you hadn't submitted your application yet."

Allison raised an eyebrow in surprise and answered carefully. "There's still plenty of time before the deadline."

"Well, yeah, but this should be a no-brainer. The sooner you do it, the sooner they'll know how many slots they have left to fill from the other applicants." He gave her another quick kiss and said, "I'll haunt you until you do it. It's a Bradford thing!"

"Great," Allison responded with a mild smile that Leslie could tell bordered on sarcasm.

"See ya, Les," Lucas said with a parting nod.

"Bye," she responded even though he had already had started walking away.

With a barely suppressed frown, Leslie finished pulling the caps off the latest batch of beer bottles.

"The savages are almost ready for the next round," Gabby said as she came for another tray load.

"Almost ready," she responded, shooting a pointed glance at the laughing and chatting crowd gathered under the "Happy Birthday" banner.

"Um," Gabby said carefully, "That's not a party face, Shay. Is it Rafferty's date? He seems like a good guy to me."

"Yep," Leslie responded flatly. She motioned to the guys gathered around him in jokes and laughter. "You know, if you turn the clock back to junior high, that group would look like the cool kids swarming the class geek for help on their papers. With the exception of Allison, who was the popular girl who just happened to be nice to him."

Gabby studied for a moment and then frowned. "Okay, that's a scarily accurate picture. But also very bitchy. You're projecting your bitter post-breakup vibes upon to others. You can't tell me that you're missing being with Devon."

"No, it's not that. He's just so *charming* and *perfect*... but he's also *pushy* and *arrogant*. I can see it even if she can't. I just don't want her to be hurt. She's been through a hell of a lot."

Gabby stared at her for a moment and then said gently, "Leslie, he's got very reasonable man flaws. I know you're protective of her but you have to admit it's nice to see her smile like that. Plus, she tried to support you and Devon. You owe her one."

Knowing she had to ease up, Leslie forced a smile and said, "You're right. I'll listen to your hetero wisdom."

Then the cell phone at her waist buzzed with an incoming text. Definitely enthused, she pulled it out and glanced at it. Ugh.

"Okay, now that's a worse expression," Gabby commented. "What's so bad?"

Leslie just shook her head and put the phone away. "Just another sign that the news of our breakup has circulated among Devon's so-called friends. Yet another 'call me' text."

"Really?! Wow, that's skanky. You're like a widower in a nursing home."

"Tell me about it," she griped as she finished piling opened beers on the serving tray.

With a barely hidden grim expression of his own, Otis came to dump off the bin of empty beer bottles. "Is the night over yet?"

Gabby remarked, "Hey, now why are *you* a grump-puss? We're raking in the bucks with this event."

Taking a sip of her own beer, Leslie snorted, "Otis just met the competition, is all."

Gabby's brain immediately put the puzzle pieces together. With triumphantly glee, she hissed, "*You're* the one that has a crush on Rafferty!"

Otis rolled his eyes in exasperation and hissed, "*Thanks a lot, Shay!*"

Leslie now felt guilty and gave him a sincerely apologetic look. "Sorry, dude. Gabby's got first access to most of my secrets. You should have known that before choosing to make me your wing-woman. It's a miracle that I kept it from her this long."

"Okay, lesson definitely learned." Otis glanced over at the couple in question that were standing arm in arm. "Looks like this one has staying power."

"You know, Otis," Gabby said as she put her arm around his shoulder in support. "The concept of you and her as a couple is nice. But if she spoke geek, we all would have seen it by now. You're going to drive her nuts very, very quickly. And just as quickly she would have disappointed the geek in you. So it's best to accept what just isn't meant to be."

"Dawson, that sucked as a pep talk," he retorted. "You happily engaged people are supposed to encourage romance. I can understand Shay being an anti-cupid right now, but you don't have an excuse."

Leslie poured him a shot and handed it over. "Trust me, Otis. You're not on Allison's radar *at all*. She's *never* asked about you. Accept it like a man and just know that it's better to forfeit the game before it starts than striking out publically *and* completely."

He looked at her, at the drink, and then took it. "Unfortunately, your state of mind just makes you more believable."

"Again, sorry, dude. At least the Fire Academy Dinner is Saturday. After that, you won't be forced to hang out with her any more than you have to."

She glanced back over at the crowd and saw that Allison had been looking at her. After a moment of eye-contact, she gave her a small smile that was genuine this time.

Allison returned the smile before turning her attention back to the men conversing before her.

Chapter 27: Allison: Fire Academy Dinner & Home

In the lobby outside the hotel ballroom, Allison stood by Brian and Joe as the three of them were dressed in their best black tie finest. Their small talk was interrupted by appearance of familiar faces from firehouses in the area, their own included. Every new person was teased comments about being all clean and pretty for the evening ahead though no one couldn't deny it felt good to be dressed up for a change.

Wearing a form-fitting green dress with her hair slicked back and touches of jewelry, Allison then heard the buzz of a text message from her cell phone inside her purse and gave it a quick check. "That was Leslie. Kelly just parked."

Still in her hand, Allison's phone then rang with an incoming call that displayed Lucas's name.

Excusing herself from her companion's for the evening, she stepped to the side and answered the phone with "Is this a real call or you just trying to act like we're on a virtual date?"

Lucas chuckled. "You have to admit that it's weird for me to be spending a Saturday night home alone when the woman I'm dating is dressed at her sexiest and out with another guy."

"Two guys. And a lesbian."

"Okay, that didn't help. Now that you're there, how late do you think you'll be?"

"You know how these things are. We're in the milling around phase. I'll call you with the details tomorrow."

"Hey, if you're not going to be out too late, do you want me to come over tonight?"

Allison stiffened at the offer. She had personally looked forward to a quiet night by herself once the evening was done. It was relaxing to approach this event with simple expectations of dressing nice, showing up for a free meal, and going home to a bubble bath alone. "I wouldn't plan on it."

"Well, I accommodate as late as you want," he persisted. "Midnight? One a.m.? I'm a night owl anyway."

She let out a silent sigh and said, "Lucas, I –"

Just then, she saw Leslie walk through the main entrance with Kelly and Erin by her side. Allison felt her attention be completely taken by the blond in a stunning black dress that was both off the shoulder and backless and a delicate hairstyle.

"—Allison?" Lucas's voice interrupted. "You still there?"

Flustered despite herself, the woman cleared her throat and forced her attention back to the phone call. "Yeah, Leslie just showed up. I've got to go. Talk to you later. Bye!"

She slipped the phone back in her purse and looked to see Leslie had been staring at her with a blank expression of her own.

The women had the briefest pause before they moved forward to greet each other with pleasant smiles.

With the partially consumed deserts and coffee before them, the quartet remained seated as Brian declared in amazement, "Wow, you're going to leave us again! But permanently this time. And we should start calling you 'Doc!'"

"I won't be starting for a couple of months yet," Allison explained. "Leslie won't have to worry about a possible return of Chout for a while. But it may take that long to prepare herself."

Even though the small group laughed, she could tell that her paramedic partner was clearly very distracted and stiff. Leslie said very little through most of the dinner even though she seemed to respond to comments and jokes appropriately.

"So have you told the Chief yet?" Joe asked.

"I didn't want to jump the gun in case something fell through so I've been keeping it quiet from everyone but Leslie," Allison answered. "But now that I received confirmation, I called him and told him the news."

"Wait, you already submitted your application?" Leslie asked, slightly frowning, as if she was trying to get up to speed on the conversation even though she had apparently been participating the entire time.

Allison nodded a little sheepishly. "Yes, I finally got off my butt last night and did it. Kendra sent me an email this morning that I've got a slot even though they won't be sending out formal acceptance notices for a while. I haven't even told my family or Lucas yet."

"Oh. Well, good for you," she said with a pleasant smile.

Even though she sensed that Leslie was being more polite than genuine, Allison smiled back and said, "Thank you!"

"Yeah, this is really great news to celebrate!" Brian declared as he stood. "I'm going to get something from the bar. Anyone want me to get something for them?"

"Actually, I need to go powder my nose," Leslie said, abruptly bolting up from her seat. She had already started walking away before saying, "I'll grab a drink of my own on the way back."

"Oh okay. *Doc?*"

"I'm good with my coffee," she responded absently, trying not to be too distracted with watching Leslie depart. She realized this would be the first and maybe only time she could be alone with the other woman all night, she grabbed her own purse and said, "I'm going to go powder my nose too. Be back in a moment."

After rushing out of the room, Allison turned the corner and was surprised to see that Leslie continued down the empty hallway, passing by the restrooms without a pause.

The other woman walked with brisk strides even though she was in the thinnest stilettos possible.

More afraid of tripping and falling in her own heels, Allison finally called out, "Leslie! Wait up!"

Leslie abruptly stopped, but she didn't turn around. She let out an audible sniff as she fished through her purse for something that she wasn't finding. "Allison, I just need a moment alone. Please."

"Are you sure?" Allison didn't stop walking until she was within arm's reach of her. But the idea of reaching out to touch the smooth, bare shoulder unnerved her. "If you honestly want me to leave, I'll go. But you seem upset and I'd like to help if I can."

Leslie let her shoulder droop and she turned around enough so that her side profile was visible as well as the redness of coming tears. "If you have tissues, you can stay."

Smiling despite her worry, Allison immediately produced a packet and offered them. "Are you upset that I didn't tell you that I had applied after all? I wanted to but I thought it could wait. I didn't think it was important enough to bug you with it."

"It's not! That's why I feel so *stupid!*" Leslie muttered as she blew her nose.

Allison couldn't help but wonder if Leslie was drunk but she didn't recall thinking the other woman looked or behaved tipsy. Taking a guess at the cause of the tears, she said gently, "Well, you've been under a lot of stress. I mean, you and Devon broke up less than a week ago. And we've had some pretty tough calls the last few shifts. So it's understandable that you could be emotionally on edge."

Leslie nodded as she wiped her eyes and nose. "You're right. I probably should take a day off to relax."

That was one suggestion that bothered Allison a bit. Yes, it would be a few months before she'd resign as a paramedic, but there was a part of her wanting to spend as much time as possible with Leslie. Even if it was work time.

"That sounds like a good idea," Allison said, trying to sound positive. "Um, if you want, I'll take time off too and we can go do something fun. A break for us both."

Apparently stunned, Leslie looked at her directly and said, "Really?"

Going with the idea that started to sound better with each passing second, Allison nodded and said, "Yeah, I haven't taken any time off in a while myself. And I might as well do it before I have to hit the medical books again. What would you like to do?"

With Leslie now standing face to face with her, Allison found that she had been staring at the other woman's lips during their conversation.

She didn't know how much time passed when she suddenly realized that the inviting mouth moved towards hers. Her brain then kicked into panic mode as she jerked backwards a step.

Upon that reaction, Leslie pulled back herself as they locked into mutual wide-eyed stares. "*I-I'm sorry!* I didn't – won't do that again!"

With her heart pounding so furiously that she could feel her body tremble, Allison opened her mouth to speak but no words came out. She was so focused on her internal panic that when she regained her composure, she stood alone in the side hallway.

Her first compulsion was to hunt Leslie down. They needed to talk, and talk *now*. Though what exactly would be said she had no idea.

When she finally came back to the hallway outside the ballroom, she saw Kelly standing by himself with his back towards her. She called out, "Severide, have you seen Leslie pass by here?"

He turned and looked clearly surprised and confused to see her coming. Then regaining his composure, he pointed in the direction of the main lobby and said, "She said she wasn't feeling well so she went to take a cab home."

"Thanks!" Allison said as she walked as fast as she could in her heels to the direction he pointed to.

Moments later, she stood outside the front of the hotel and couldn't find Leslie in the taxi line.

Numb and weary, Allison collapsed on her couch and let Muffin settle on her lap even though it meant getting orange and white hairs all over her outfit. She had also excused herself right after Leslie's abrupt departure, which no doubt caused a lot of raised high-brows. But she didn't care about gossip; she was consumed with worry about the other woman.

Yet, as concerned as she was, she couldn't bring herself to drive over to the Shayveride home.

She wanted Leslie to come talk to her willingly instead of being hunted down. On the drive home, she realized she felt awful and confused if she had given any signs of misleading the other woman. If anything, she didn't want their relationship to be destroyed beyond repair.

Suddenly her phone rang with an incoming call from the purse that she had dumped on the kitchen counter. Scooping up Muffin, Allison lunged for it.

The name on display was Lucas's, not Leslie's.

Feeling her stomach drop in disappointment, Allison froze and realized that she was not in the mood to deal with him. She pressed the button to ignore the call so it would go to voicemail. Then she looked at her phone and thought *What the hell* as she pressed the button to call Leslie.

It went to voicemail.

Feeling hurt, Allison decided she needed a hot shower to wash away as much of that night's tension as possible.

Chapter 28: Leslie: 51 & Home

As they carpooled to work, Leslie couldn't help but sink as low as possible in the passenger seat of Kelly's car.

With every passing second, she really regretted not calling in sick. Even more, she regretted not calling Allison and settling everything in their day off yesterday, Sunday – the day after that disastrous Fire Academy Dinner. At the very least she should have apologized.

"Oh, so you're finally going to tell me what happened between you and Raff at the dinner?" Kelly asked.

Leslie blinked and realized that she had actually talked out loud when she hadn't meant to. "Um, what did she say?"

"Nothing. She left right after you did. In fact, she went looking for you. But she looked pretty upset too."

"Oh." Leslie felt her heart tighten to the size of a pebble. "What does everyone think happened?"

"You know how everyone is: we didn't talk about it even though we wanted to. We figured it was between the two of you."

Realizing that if there was anyone that she could be honest with it would be her best friend, the man with whom she'd shared some of each other's worst experiences. "I tried to kiss her. And she wasn't receptive to it."

"Wow. Okay, that is big," he said as he kept part of his attention on driving. "Were you drunk?"

"No. I wish. That would make this a lot easier and a lot less embarrassing."

"So you *wanted* to kiss her?"

"... Yes." Now Leslie felt her face turn the color of a tomato.

Kelly actually chuckled. "I wondered what took you so long. At least you waited for Devon to be out of the picture. That boyfriend can be gotten rid of. Just give me the word and I'll drop a line to some 'connections' at CPD."

"Oh shut up!" she said, finally laughing herself at the sudden release in tension.

However, the good mood seemed to evaporated as Kelly pulled the car up to his normal parking spot in front of 51. Allison's car was parked in its normal spot too.

After Kelly turned off the car, he gave the woman a playful slug in the shoulder. "Go get her, tiger!"

"Shut! Up!"

Moments later, they entered the locker room and Leslie suddenly felt extremely aware of any looks in her direction from their comrades. Allison wasn't in there but a couple of the other guys were and they greeted both of them with a smile and a nod.

After she had changed her clothes, Leslie took a deep breath and made her way to the common room.

Otis and Cruz were at the main table but Allison wasn't.

They greeted her with a genuinely friendly smile. It was as if everyone was on egg-shells.

Without waiting another moment, Otis pointed to the garage. "She's stocking the rig."

"Ah, thanks," Leslie said, trying to maintain a veneer of casualness.

Once she had stepped out into the hallway, she took a deep breath and tried to shake the nerves from her hands.

Even the rescue guys gave her a pleasant morning nod as they chowed down on their breakfast.

And then she walked up to the ambulance to find Allison sitting in the opened back with a clipboard and pen as she quietly went through their stock.

Leslie couldn't help but pause in appreciation at the sight of the other woman sitting in her work t-shirt and pants, dressed in the complete opposite of how she appeared that Saturday night. This was how she liked seeing Allison, practical and unpretentious, which was the core of what she loved about the other woman.

Upon that realization, Leslie took a breath and walked forward.

She was still a few feet away when Allison glanced up at her. There was a pause before the other woman gave her a small smile of relief.

"Hi," Allison said simply. "You look okay. I'm glad."

Leslie paused before the opened vehicle and said, "And I'm the one who should apologize."

"Don't. You were drunk and I gave you a misleading impression. It was equally my fault."

Leslie glanced around to double-check that no one was within easy hearing distance. But just in case, she pointed to the empty seat in the back of the rig. "May I?"

"Of course," Allison responded as she went back to counting vials of medicine.

Leslie climbed into the back of the vehicle, careful to avoid any casual brush of contact with her PIC. She wanted to close the door to ensure maximum privacy but realized that would make the atmosphere even more... *awkward* between them.

Taking a strengthening breath, Leslie said in a low voice, "For the record, I wasn't drunk. And you know me well enough by now to know that... And also for the record, when I broke up with Devon I admitted to her that I thought you were everything I could want. You're a doctor. You want children. You're hot. And I knew that I didn't have a chance because you had no interest in me, no matter how much I teased you about it.

"But I didn't want you to go back to Chicago Med because that meant the part about you that I could take for granted would be taken away. I liked being able to rely on seeing you on a regular basis even if it's something as boring as just sitting in traffic together. I know we consider each other friends and can always make plans to hang out but it's not the same. I mean, I know from experience with Gabby leaving to be a firefighter. And she and I are part owners of Molly's so we've got that. But you and I don't have anything else tying us together.

"And so on top of everything, I've been a selfish friend by not supporting you in the way I should. So I've been a shit all the way around. That's what I'm sorry for."

Allison finally paused and looked up at her. She had her flat, unreadable expression. "Then you're not sorry for trying to kiss me?"

Leslie froze as she mentally rewound what she had just said. "Uh, I thought I apologized for that."

"No, you didn't," the other woman reported in a deadpan tone.

"Then, yes, I apologize for that!" Leslie blurted through a blush.

And Allison just stared at her. Finally, she put down her clipboard and went to the edge of the rig and looked around. Apparently satisfied with her scan, she then closed the doors of the ambulance and just sat and looked at her under the harsh glare of the vehicle lights.

At the other woman's intense stare, Leslie stiffened in alarm and apprehension. She could barely breathe as her heart started to pound through her chest.

Then Allison's expression softened as she returned to her seat. But she didn't pick up the clipboard again. Instead, she said, "I did a lot of thinking yesterday. It was probably a good thing we didn't talk because it gave me time to put things into perspective. And the one thing that went over and over in my mind was that when Lucas first tried to kiss me, I was distracted by the thought of you at the last possible second. – "

Leslie felt her heart suddenly skip a beat.

"—But I forced it aside and pretended it didn't happen. Because it just didn't make sense and had no purpose. It was easier to have someone else make the decisions and push me along. And that's how I realize I've been behaving with Lucas. Plus, I also ignored the fact that every single time I was with him, I thought about someone else. Gil, you, whomever. - However, when I'm with *you*, I don't think about anyone else. Even when you tried to kiss me. I didn't think about Lucas, or Gil. I was... not ready for it."

As she tried to absorb what the other woman said, Leslie's brain felt like it was spinning out of control. "So, are you saying that's good or bad?"

With her now aggravating poker face, Allison looked at her again and said, "It's bad for Lucas... Or at least it was. I broke things off with him yesterday. I mean, we're going to try being friends. So we'll see how that works out. After all, I'm still returning to Chicago Med."

Now Leslie's heart dropped. "Oh."

"But, I could defer re-enrolling for next year's residency program. I'm in no rush to stop being a paramedic and I admit I like the lifestyle for the moment. So I think there's something that we need to settle for me to decide for certain."

"Like what?" she asked sincerely.

Allison now had the most mild smirk at the corner of her mouth. Then she moved forward so it was clear that she was bringing her face closer to Leslie's.

Freezing from head to toe, Leslie held her breath as those lips came closer. Then the women gently kissed. With their hands eventually weaving through each other's hair and along their necks and shoulders, their contact was hesitant and cautious at first. But the intensity eventually started to build between them. Like months of tension was finally allowed to be let loose.

Then in a flash, one of them made a move that went from tenderness to passion. The next thing she knew, Leslie was trying to take off her own t-shirt as Allison started to undo her pants.

"Ambulance 61! —"

The women both froze at the cold voice that broadcasted the details of the call throughout the firehouse.

In the next instant, both women were trying to subdue the signs of their mutual arousal as they tried to make themselves publically presentable for the call. Seconds later, they were both sitting in the front seat of the ambulance exiting the firehouse with the siren wailing.

They shared a look and a laugh as they knew some things just had to continue to wait.

Stretched out on her stomach in the large bed, Leslie had been in a deep sleep with her face buried in a pillow. She then sensed a small presence move on the end of the bed in her direction. She felt the delicate, little paws of the cat walk up the back of her legs and finally standing upon her bare back.

"Muffin? Seriously?" Leslie murmured as she waited to see if the cat would move on her own.

Instead, the feline curled up into a ball on the smooth skin of her new cushion.

Allison let out a laugh from across the bedroom.

"Are you just going to stand there and watch this?!" Leslie blurted, not able to move so she couldn't see her.

"I came to see if you wanted some coffee or to join me in a morning shower."

"Yes and yes. But can you move your child please?"

"Hmmm, nope. If you're going to be spending more time here, you need to learn tough love and move her on your own."

"What?! I can't – See, now she's *purring!*"

"She knows you're her bitch. Better you than me. So I'm going to go get some coffee for myself."

"Wait – I'll move her off in ten minutes."

"Five."

"*All right!* But I can't see the clock."

"I've got it covered," Allison said as she then lay down on the empty side of the bed with her cell phone and wearing only a bathrobe.

Leslie smiled now that she could easily see the other woman. It was also nice to wake up without a hangover too. "Wait, are you web surfing?"

Allison gave her a pointed look. "What else am I going to do while we wait? You're not going anywhere in – four minutes, are you?"

"Guess not," Leslie said as she suddenly felt Muffin shift her position and let out a yawn. "Hey, turn it so I can see it too."

"Yes, dear."

- The End -

Extended Author's Notes

Yes, this is *it* as far as I'm concerned. Even though there are so many directions and possible storylines that could be pursued, I need to move on creatively and ending at this point lets me personally reach closure while I'm apprehensively awaiting for season three to air. And if season three totally sucks as far as Shafferty is concerned? I can't think that far ahead. I've got to get through the summer for now. But I don't see myself returning to this particular universe. Too much to do with little reward.

But the main reason why I had to stop writing is that while I could continue to explore all sorts of plot ideas, I decided to save those ideas for works where I actually owned the creative rights.

Also, as a person who wrote and self-published lesbian erotica, it did feel odd for me to not bring this story to that kind of scene in explicit details. But (1) this is a teen-rated fic, (2) I don't own the characters and (3) I don't write erotica for free. (If you want more info on the topic and you're of adult age in your country, go to my personal web site where I'll make a significant project announcement in August.)

Other Random Notes:

Muffin: Yes, I read the reviews and her unexpected popularity made me feel compelled to make sure she shared the final scene with our two leading ladies. Plus I'm a sucker for cats - as if it wasn't obvious.

Devon: I completely agree that her personality in the TV show is a horrible caricature meant for straight men's fantasies (no fault to the actress Vedette Lim, who has the thankless job of portraying a character meant to be hated on many different levels.) And I couldn't get into her personality in my fic because it meant I also had to figure out how Leslie would interact to such a someone without making her look equally bad. (I don't think it's a coincidence that we don't have true verbal chemistry scenes between Leslie/Devon in the show.) So to make her a remotely interesting character from a writer's perspective, I chose to look at the few clues of her background and chose to pursue her incarnation as a Daddy's Girl who is also an adult child of an alcoholic. Luckily that gave me some good plot ideas too in order to give her character a somewhat graceful and plausible exit.

Lucas: I really hate introducing completely original characters in fanfic. But I needed someone plausible to get Allison back in the world of Chicago Med as well as trigger Leslie's feelings. Plus, it spared me having to put an existing character in that 'unfair' position that may be irrelevant when the TV series continues.

Weird Timing: During the most of the time of writing this fic, I had been doing marathon watching of *Grey's Anatomy* since I just discovered Calzona (yes, I'm very, very late, I know.) After I finished the chapter where Leslie and Devon finally broke up, I had been watching an episode when a onetime guest star doctor appeared where I thought "That woman looks very,

very familiar." So of course, it bugged me enough that I web-surfed and saw that the actor was Vedette (Devon) Lim. Ironically, I also saw that Lim's credit included being *True Blood's* Tara's lover a few seasons back. That made me laugh since I'm a Tara/Pam fan but that's a totally different fan frustration.

Dedication: Finally, I do like to credit stories to the people had a significant role in terms of story inspiration. So the obvious ones are Christine (Allison Rafferty) Evangelista and Lauren (Leslie Shay) German, whose performances as these beloved characters inspired me to write a fanfic that I never thought I would do on many different levels. Fingers and toes crossed that we'll see some real Shafferty in the show in the season to come!

... And now I am done. Thank you very much for reading!