

# *Don't let me go*

*A Chicago PD one-shot*



*Histoire originale par Shadow's quill.*

Jay had always liked being in the police. Even if there were bad days, he liked his job. He hadn't dreamt about it when he was younger. When he was a little boy, he wanted to be an actor in his favorite cartoon. Growing up, he found out that it was impossible. He then went to a career more athletic. American football and hockey suited him pretty well. He was even pretty good and didn't suffer from severe injuries unlike many many of the athletes. Unfortunately this life didn't seem to be destined to him. Recruiters weren't interested in him. Then, life becoming more and more difficult, he chose himself a new path.

Right after his graduation in high school, he had stopped his studies and applied for army. He had been taken in and formed in little time. It had made him revisit his priority and had made him able to travel in the world. Of course, he had seen – and had taken part – in many horrific things and injustice whose images would forever stayed engraved in his memories and nightmares but it also had let him focus on him and find a new path. At the end of his second contract, he had been diagnosed with severe PTSD for what he had to see a therapist for several months. Following the diagnosis, he had left the army.

He had to get through a lot of troubles before going back to a stable life. His therapist had helped him to find a proper housing than his seedy hotel room and had compelled him to work on a lot of little jobs to learn again how to live in society. It hadn't been easy because his mind had been conditioned to react in war's zone. Every little noise could make him be on the alert and push him to overreact. Little by little, a normal life was being open for him. He then chose to settle in Chicago and enlist himself in the police. After different passages in the city's districts, he had admitted in the 21 and had worked under the orders of Trudy Platt while dreaming of joining the Intelligence section leaded by Henry Voigt.

He had been training hard and had gotten the best results possible to do so. Unfortunately, just like recruiters in his teenage years, the sergeant seemed to royally ignore him. When the team had been dismantled and Hank put in jail, Jay felt his hopes fly away. He had seen this elite team being brought back together again and search for new members. An offer was made to him but rather than rushing headlong, he had preferred thinking about it. Antonio had come several times to convince him. Jay finally gave in to be a part of the new team and Antonio vouched for it to Voigt to admit him.

It's been two months now since he got into the Intelligence section and, though the Voigt's method that he often disagrees, he liked it very much. What he liked the most in the police was being able to help people. He was able to do a lot of good in his career. He had helped many people to do well. Some people even became his Cis. There were particularly precious for the cases he was working on with the unity. He'd like to be able of helping everyone but that was impossible. However, when one of his Cis had called him for help in the middle of the night, he didn't hesitate and jumped into his car.

Here was why he was rushing through Chicago's streets at an hour when even the dogs stopped barking after the night's shadows. He only had time to put on a jogging, a sweat and his shoes before leaving his flat. He had a gun in his glove box. He hoped not to have to use it but felt like it wouldn't be the case. The desperate words that went through the phone when he picked it up were on repeat in his mind and he speeded up. He didn't care about the violations he was committing as long as he was there in time. His anxiety went up when he got into the hot districts of Chicago.

He was forced to slow down to not get noticed. He knew where he had to go and regretted that it was in a such desolate area of Chicago. If he were taken in that part of the town, it would be bad. He had to act quick and good. He quickly located the motel from where his CI had called him. He stopped his car on the parking lot, put his gun in his pant's elastic and went to the reception where he showed a pic of the person he was looking for. When he had his information, he went slowly but surely to the room indicated by the housekeeper, gun at hand. Shouts broke the night's silence, making him understand the gravity of the situation.

\_ Chicago P.D. ! *He shouted while knocking on the door.*

Shouts went on and nobody obeyed. The only answer that Jay got were the three bullets that went through the door. The suspect was armed and dangerous. His CI was really in danger. He had to do something. But how to do without getting hit by a lost bullet ?

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As long as she could remember, Erin Lindsay always hated her life. She was the daughter of an alcoholic and drug addict mother and of an unknown father. Hardly born, she went through Hell. She always had to fight that idea that her life wasn't worth living it. She had tried to live like a normal little girl by going to school and making friends. However, the bad characters her mother had did have an influence on her. She was just a kid but she lived like an adult. At eight years old, she was more clear-headed than most of children. She was the one taking care of her mother, cleaning her vomit and going to fetch her drug.

As she was still young, she had found herself in a lot of schemings because she was naive. She was getting used to the streets but was still going to school. A part of her wanted to have a normal course even though it had

become difficult to reconcile school and streets' life. She had often been summoned in the director's office but never told or let seen her situation. It was a secret she kept buried in her. If people knew the truth, she would be separated from her mother. Even if she wasn't an exemplary relative, she was still her mother. She didn't want to be placed in another family.

Erin didn't really have dreams except for having a better life. She wanted her mom to get herself together and to take care of her like the normal mothers she saw at school. Oh, yeah. She wanted Bunny to become so but she hadn't planned it so Erin kept on cleaning the vomit, playing courier and closing her eyes on men that went regularly. She had always been afraid that one of them came into her room to do the same to her. Even when she closed her eyes tightly and put her fingers in her ears, she still heard them. Sometimes she had nightmares and stayed up for hours hoping for the images and noises to disappear.

She was eleven when her nightmare became reality. No matter how much she shouted, cried and begged, nothing changed. Her own mother didn't come to protect her, to prevent her from being sullied. It took weeks for her to get back on her feet and months to stop telling herself she was dirty and disgusting. After that, she had left home, not bearing anymore to be haunted by memories and fear she would live it again. She had learned how to survive in the streets by stealing and doing some things for bad characters. She was earning some money and preventing her from being found by her mother who barely looked after her when she left.

It was in this period of instability that she had met Charlie. On the contrary of the others, he had felt her potential. He then had taken her in and had put her up in his modest home. She was three years younger than him but they were as thick as thieves. She worked for him knowing that her security was assured. If someone hit her, he or she would bitterly regret it. Her and Charlie finally worked out as an almost ordinary couple. She was still doing the missions he was giving her without any defiance though it was more and more demanding. The conditions were difficult to fulfill. It had been so until she was caught in the middle of an police intervention and busted by sergeant Voight.

She was locked in a cell of the 21 district and under the watch of one of Voight's detective. The latter often came to force her into talking but she never said anything although he was making her threats and deals. He never got anything from her. Yet, he managed to track Charlie down and to bust him. When her boyfriend had seen her again, he blamed her for being responsible of all of this, denied her and threatened her from death. She was highly upset by this and blamed Voight for destroying her life. She even spat in his face when he released her without any charges against her. Later, when Charlie ran away from his jail, Voight wanted to put her under protection. She replied by disappearing in nature.

She was about seventeen when she came back in Chicago et learnt Charlie's death et that her other pulled herself together. She was sure that Charlie came back for her and that Voight didn't see it that way. As for her mother, Erin didn't even want to see her. This woman was the origin of all of her bad days. After Charlie had left, she took all her genitor's bad habits : alcoholism, heroin addiction and prostitution. It wasn't easy to make a name for herself with Voight behind her. Soon as he heard that she was back, he hung around in her districts to find her. She let him know that she didn't want his help. Despite everything, she felt he wasn't giving up on her.

Years passing by, she didn't have news from him anymore. Yet, several times, officers in uniform had made raids in the districts. She always had the reflex to hide and watch by far. However, once, she was glapped with a displeased client when they came. She couldn't run away and the guy was threatening her with a knife. An officer stepped in and goth her out of here. She was still under the shock when he put his jacket on her shoulders and led her to the back of an emergency truck to make sure she was fine. On the contrary of Voight, she immediately knew that she could trust him. She accepted his phone number et learnt that his name was Jay Halstead.

They saw each other again on other interventions and he always ended up getting herself out of a mess. She still denied leaving the quarter and her activies though Jay was insisting for her to do so. As she was perfectly stubborn, he couldn't make her change her mind but succeeded in making a dal with her : he promised to help her treat her addictions if she became his CI. She didn't accept immediately but ended up giving way to his demand as he was insisting. Little by little, they built a real trustful realationship. Erin was now healed from her addiction to the great displeasure of her pimp. When he showed up that night threatening her with a gun, she discreetly called Jay.

Now, she was praying for him to come quickly. She already bore some punches and her boss wasn't going to stop here. He violently flattened her on the floor and immobilized her so she couldn't move. She kicked to free herself but couldn't do anything. When he got out a box full of pills. She understood what he was going to do and struggled as she clenched her teeth.

\_ It's about time you learn to obey to the orders we gave you, Erin Lindsay. This time, you won't be able to run away.

The cruel glint glowing in his eyes wasn't reassuring the young woman. He tried to put the pills in her mouth but she shook her head to prevent him from doing so. Incensed, he slapped her and pinched her nose. She was forced

to open her mouth to breathe. He took advantage of the moment to put the pills in and forced her to swallow by putting his hand over her mouth.

\_ ...

\_ You'll always be my property.

\_ I'll never do anything for you ! *She shouted in return.*

She struggled even more and was receiving as much punches as she was giving. When he tried to rape her, she started shouting in the hope of someone coming to rescue her. As the pimp was owning the motel, there was no such a chance. Her hope went up when knocks were giving on the door.

\_ CHICAGO P.D. ! *They heard with the knocks.*

\_ You called the cops, you bitch !

Punches, insults and shouts doubled. Suddenly, the pimp took his arm in his pant's belt, hit Erin's head with the grip and shot three bullets in the door. The cop won't enter the room alive. Erin shouldn't expect any help.

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Jay got away from the door while hearing the first shot. The bullet only had time to scratch his thigh. It ripped the fabric of his pant without touching the skin. He had luck. However, he doubted that Erin got the same luck. He heard the shouts, the punches and the insults. That guy was beating her to death, physically and psychologically. He had to act but couldn't do it without any backup. If he tried, he would be holed from everywhere. As silently as possible, he got back to his car. He was surprised not to see any curious people behind the curtains after the gun shots. As if nobody lived there. Lucky.

Jay got in his car and started it up. He left the parking lot and stopped the car out of sight of the building. Then, he opened the trunk, took off his sweat and put a T-shirt on. He got his second gun, the one he kept hidden with the spare wheel, and checked the bullets left in the cartridge. He only had to put his bulletproof vest on but, before that, he needed backup. He didn't want all the team to come. Too many cops would scare the pimp who could then hurt Erin even more. Jay only needed one person to back him up. He knew exactly who and, even if he would probably regret it, he didn't hesitate in taking his phone and giving the call.

\_ *Voight, was answered Jay immediately.*

\_ One of my CIs just sent me an SOS.

\_ *I guess you're already there.*

\_ I couldn't get in the room. My CI isn't alone. She's with a blind with rage guy. He's violent and armed. I made him believe that I left. It gives me time to kit out.

\_ *Get straight to the point, Halstead.*

\_ I need backup.

\_ *You want the team ?*

\_ No, just you. And an emergency truck.

\_ *Send me the address. I'm on my way.*

\_ No problem.

\_ *Don't do bullshits, Halstead.*

Voight hung up. Jay put his phone back in his pocket right after he sent the address and put his bulletproof vest on. He took his second gun, closed the trunk and got back to the motel, still silently. He posted himself near the room where Erin was captive and looked around while listening closely. He shouldn't move until Voight's arrival. Inside the room, he heard whispers. He highly wanted to go in the room and save Erin but it was risky. What were they doing in there ? Did the pimp take advantage of his absence to hurt her or even more ? What would he do if... He promised to protect her. He couldn't fail.

While he was still looking around waiting for Voight, he heard noises in the room, like a fight. Then, once again, Jay heard Erin's protests. At least, she was still alive. But that also meant that the pimp was still there and that he was hurting her. When she started shouting again at her pimp, Jay couldn't wait anymore. He knocked down the door with a kick and pointed his gun at the man who was above Erin on the bed. Immediately, the pimp got up, taking his victim with him. He kept her captive and put the barrel of his gun against her head. A vindictive smile stretched on his lips while Jay discovered his CI's bruised face.

\_ Get the gun down now ! *Said Jay furious.*

\_ You, get it down !

\_ No fucking way this would happen !  
\_ If you don't, I'll blow up her head !  
\_ The, nothing will prevent me from killing you.  
\_ If you really cared about this bitch, you would have got this fucking gun down !  
\_ Nothing tells me that you're gonna let her go even if I put my gun down.  
\_ True. I'd rather see her dead than with another one.

Jay looked into Erin's eyes. She was terrified. As rotten her life was, she wanted to live it a little longer. He felt that she wanted to defend herself but didn't do it because of the gun the pimp kept against her head. The trigger guard was off and he was playing with the trigger, hoping Jay would drop his to save Erin's life. The latter was all messed up. Blood was running on her face and red marks were appearing on her neck and arms. The guy abused her but not only. Her eyes were glowing but not only because of the tears. The son of a bitch did something else to her, something that made her feel hopeless and defeated. Erin always appeared as a strong woman to Jay's eyes, even in the difficult times, but that night, she was defeated. Deep down, she didn't think there was an exit door. How was he going to prove her wrong ?

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After the three gunshots, the silence went back on the motel and in the room. Erin was still laying on the ground, dizzy because of the knock she just received. Her pimp released her and went near the door. The gunshots didn't get any answer. Jay didn't tell anything. Had he been hit ? Why wasn't he responding ? Erin started to freak out. That man was the only one able to save her. If he weren't there anymore, how would she get away ? Who would she trust ? Her pimp was posted near the door, listening closely. Was he expecting Jay's return ? Was he enjoying his victory ? Tears were running down Erin's cheeks. She felt her hope decline with minutes passing by. She heard a car leaving the parking lot and her heart stopped beating. He was gone, he left her in her condition. The pimp came back on her and brutally caught her chin with his hand.

\_ Seems like it's only you and me, dearie.  
\_ ...  
\_ Your friend the cop just left you. How does it feel to be betrayed ?  
\_ ...  
\_ Don't worry. I'm staying here, *he added, stroking her face with his free hand.*

When she turned her head to avoid the move, he took it like a provocation and got angry again. He got up and looked at the woman laying at his feet. She couldn't move because her head was hurting. He was looking at her like we watch a garbage and she hated that. She hated being proved right, being watched like she wasn't worth it, like she was useless. She closed her eyes not to see that reflection of herself, that failure in her life. The pimp shouted something at her, something she was trying not to hear. He was reminding her of her miserable condition. He hammered home his words to hurt her more deeply than any weapon would ever do. And she believed him. She was just a common shit we just fucked to remind us why we shouldn't end up like her. As she wasn't reacting to insults, he started to kick her, then to punch her. Exhausted, Lindsay ended up letting go.

\_ ...  
\_ You're not even worth being someone's interest. The world would be better if you disappeared. But before, you will do something more for me.

When Erin opened her eyes later, she was laying on the bed of the motel's room. She had difficulty reminding what had happened earlier. A throbbing pain was twisting her head and the intense light of the room wasn't helping. If the pain increased, she would be sick. She had to proceed step by step. She started by closing her eyes and tried to gather the pieces of the exploded puzzle of her memory. As her hand was reaching her head to massage her temple, she heard one of her bones crack and another unbearable pain appeared in her rib cage. It left her breathless. She tried to turn on the side to calm her down but the pain only grew up. She chose to stay still hoping that someone or something would come and relieve her. The lack of air was burning her lungs when the face of her pimp came in her sight. She held out his hand towards him.

\_ Help... Me... *She succeeded in articulate.*  
\_ Of course I'll help you. You can't die now.

He caught her hand and leant towards her. He pressed his lips against hers. This simple gesture disgusted her but she was so in pain that she couldn't get free. The touch made her want to throw up. She refused him the access of

her mouth. Then, she saw the eyes of her mac. She saw the arousal mixed to the anger and got scared. She didn't like that look. She saw it too many times on other clients of whom she didn't want to satisfy the demand. He was going to try to take advantage on her. As she was really weak, it wouldn't be that difficult. What would he do when he will have what he wanted ? In her state, no one would ever want her. She wouldn't make any money. Was he going to make her disappear like he did with some other girls ? As soon as they become a burden, he made her disappear. If someone asked anything, the same thing happened.

Erin was even more terrified. She had challenged his authority and refused his advances. She made everything to go against him : he was going to get rid of her. But, before that, he was going to take his due. As she wasn't willing to do it voluntarily, he had to do by force. She stuttered some pleas hoping making him change his mind. Lost cause. He sat astride her, caught her wrists and kept it hold over her head while he wedged her legs between his knees. With his free hand, he ripped off her T-shirt and made his fingers slide on his white skin. The simple fact that he was touching her made her tremble with disgust and when his mouth followed his fingers, she couldn't bear it anymore. She started to struggle again shouting. It was unlikely like someone was going to help her. She was going to die that night but didn't want it to happen that way. She didn't want to get sullied again.

She hardly had that thought when the door opened with roars. The pimp brutally got off her and got up dragging her away. Everything happened so quickly that she was dizzy and the pain stronger than ever. She heard shoutings but didn't succeed in understanding what was saying. The room was turning too quickly around her and she was conscious of the gun's barrel against her temple so hard that she could feel the thing getting engraved in her skin. The lower move would lead her to the slaughterhouse. She was over. She looked up and saw Jay's eyes. He was focused on his target but made sure that she was okay. Eyes on his, she felt her inner panic calm down and the time considerably started to slow down. Even if she wasn't going to make it – and she was 99% sure it would be the case – Jay would bust her pimp. He would arrest her murderer and she would be avenged and in peace. However, Jay seemed to understand what she was up to.

\_ No, *he shouted, powerless.*

The following scene happened slowly to Erin's eyes but was really quick. Plucking up her courage, she stepped on her pimp's foot who released her cursing. She took advantage of the situation and ran away. He aimed his gun at her. New screams crossed the room and there was a gunshot. Then, second one. The detonation tore the air and resonated a long time in the night's silence. Erin's ears were whistleing. Was she hit ? She didn't even know ? Everything was happening so slowly. It seemed like she lost notions of time. That night counted like one of the longest of her whole life. One of the most painful too. She didn't know what had just happened but she was feeling so shaky that she had to grip the bed's edge not to fall. The night's wind stroke her face. It was over. Now, she knew it. She was free and she couldn't help but smile before collapsing.

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Jay kept his gun aimed at the head of the guy that was keeping Erin captive but in the same time he made sure that she wasn't going to let go. She was messily messed up and, seeing her shirt's state, he had arrived before the irrevocable happened. It was at least a thing for what he was relieved. Now, he just had to find a way to make this gun disappear before the pimp pressed the trigger. That coward used Erin like a shield. He didn't have the balls to accept his acts. He wanted to make her pay for her own acts but as terrified as Lindsay was, she didn't planned on leaving without fighting. Jay saw her do it before he could even react. He screamed to prevent her from doing so but she already stepped on her pimp's foot and walked out of his reach. The other raised his gun in her back to shoot her while cursing but Jay was faster. He shooted him in the shoulder. The pimp was unbalanced and fell to the ground. His bullet went to the ceiling.

Immediately, Jay jumped on him and sent the gun away from his hand. The pimp was cursing him and was insulting Lindsay and him while he was pressing in his wound. Jay wasn't paying attention to his words. He was looking for something to handcuff him. He kept a check on Erin. She seemed totally shocked by the night's events. Shaky like a leaf, she was gripping the edge of the bed not to fall. Jay could feel her relief. He could breathe again. Tension compelled him to hold his breathe to act without mistakes. He was relieved that she seemed to be okay but also to be able to arrest the mad guy that was exploiting her. She was free. If she wanted to change her life, he would erase her from his CIs. He only could wish her the best but somewhere deep inside, he was sad that she would actually get away from him. That was a really stupid reaction and he couldn't understand it well.

\_ Hey, Jay, *she whispered,* do you think that people like me really can change their life ?

He was going to answer when he saw her stagger. He quickly reacted to catch her before she fall to the ground. The great fatigue and the outpouring defeated her. Unconscious like this in his arms, she looked particularly

vulnerable. He checked her pulse and laid her on the bed in recovery position when he was sure she was okay. Voight should come with an emergency truck. It was surprising that no one had arrived yet. Did they have any trouble on the road ? The quarter didn't really like uniforms. If they had been delay by riots, they would be there anytime soon. Jay was hesitating. What should he do ? Erin had to see a doctor to make sure her pimp didn't caused any considerable damages. However, the pimp had to be brought to the district to be incarcerated. Jay couldn't do both things in the same time. He didn't think about this when he picked up his phone.

\_ If you touch that gun, I'll make sure you would never be able to use your hand again.

Jay turned back when he heard that voice in his back. The pimp took advantage of him caring about Erin to dive on his gun. He was interrupted by Hank Voight. The latter was standing in the doorway and aimed his gun at the man on the ground. He threw his handcuffs to Jay. The latter caught them and handcuffed the pimp before he took advantage of another opportunity. Voight picked up the gun and waved to the emergency services to come in. One took care of the pimp while the other looked at Erin. Voight and Jay exchanged a look but nothing was said. The sergeant saved himself for later. For now, he was just looking at the medics working. The pimp's case was quickly settled. He just needed an x-ray to make sure the bullet didn't do damages. Erin's case needed more treatments. She was dragged on a stretcher. She would travel at the back of the emergency truck. Jay wouldn't let her go alone. Not after this crazy night.

\_ Who's coming with her ?

\_ Him, *Voight said instead of Jay.* He's gonna meet you there.

\_ Okay.

\_ And I'm taking care of him, *he added showing the pimp.*

The two cops watched the medics leave carrying Erin to the Chicago Med. When the emergency truck was out of their sight, Voight compelled the pimp to get up and dragged him to his car while Jay was telling the housekeeper the need of keeping the crime scene intact. Then, he met his boss. He succeeded in making the pimp go in the back of his SUV though he was protesting and threatening. He wouldn't put on airs and graces when Voight would take care of him. And this would happen very soon. However, Jay was more concerned for himself. Especially when he saw the glower Voight sent him when got to the car. Without a word, he forced him to get in the car and drove him to his. Jay got rid of his kevlar vest and of his guns before putting back his sweat. He was going to get into his car when Voight called him. Jay swallowed before facing him.

\_ Hum ?

\_ You do this again, I'll put you back to the traffic.

\_ If I didn't come in, he would have killed her. I wouldn't be able to live knowing that. I think I've done my job right.

\_ I witnessed the scene. You were right. Nice job.

Before Jay could answer, Voight was gone. Jay got in his car and went to the hospital. He showed his ID and asked to see Erin. He was said she was currently with a doctor and that he was going to wait for the end of the medical exam to see her. They only knew that she was still unconscious and that her state wasn't critical. It was a good sign. Jay thought about the question she asked before collapsing. It only had been a whisper but he still heard it. She wondered if she could change her life. Were people « like her » really able to change their life ? Jay knew she was talking about her condition. For him, she was so much more than just a whore. He didn't even understand how she could have fell so low. Erin was a smart, intuitive and strong woman. He was persuaded that she could have a new life. He told himself that he would help her while he sat on a chair in the casualty department.

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It's been day for a while on Chicago. Around six in the morning, Jay had news about Erin. She was pretty messed up but there were no considerable damages. She only had a lot of bruises and a concussion. As soon as you'd wake up, the doctor would do a new exam to make sure her brain was okay. Then, Jay would be able to bring her home. Except that Erin didn't really have a home since she got back in Chicago. She'd only been from motel to motel, from shelter to shelter. No hideout was regular. Today, she was in the street, with no family and no friends. She had to start her life all over again. But she never knew anything else than this miserable life of prostitution and drugs. Of course, she wasn't doping herself anymore thanks to Jay but he was sure she was still dealing.

Voight had come earlier to have some news and bring his badge. He then got back to the crime scene. While searching the room, he found a box of pills. The pimp confessed by himself that he forced Lindsay to have some of it. Jay talked about it to the doctor. The latter had done a gastric lavage. Now, Erin had found her position in a bed in the casualty department. Jay ended up sleeping on the chair next to her. He didn't let her out of his sight, waiting for her to wake up. He'd already signed the papers for her treatments. He was surprised when he learnt that the district was paying the bills but didn't say anything. He would talk about it later with Voight. For now, he was enjoying that moment of peace to rest. He was still sleeping when Erin suddenly opened her eyes, panicked. She struggled against the sheets, hoping to run away from a nightmarish vision, probably the one of her pimp trying to kill her.

When she succeeded in extricating herself, she jumped from the bed and ran. The casualty department was buzzing. Doctors and nurses went from a patient to another. Nobody was paying attention to her. She easily could disappear in the hospital without someone seeing her. She didn't see Jay, she was stuck in a nightmare whose she didn't wake up. This could be dangerous. Nobody was caring about her because everyone was busy elsewhere. A car wreck on the ninth street had done many damages and wounded persons. Jay should have been on the spot but Voight decided to let his team out that case. He said that it wasn't their responsibility and that they were already working on something else. The commander didn't like that refusal and asked what was that case whom he didn't hear about but the sarge didn't say anything. He would give the report in given time.

\_ Sir ?

Jay woke up with a start while someone was shaking him. Hearing the chaos around him, all his senses started being on the alert. He thought he was back on the battlefield and was about to attack a nurse thinking it was an enemy. He stopped his automatic defense gesture when he recognized the coat. He rubbed his eyes and stretched out to get out of sleep whom was still holding him. He didn't sleep enough and the lack of sleep was playing with his nerves.

\_ Sorry, old soldier reflex, *he said to the nurse who was facing him.* What's happening ?

\_ There was a car wreck on the ninth street. We're trying to free some bads for the wounded people. Are you waiting for someone ?

\_ If I'm waiting... Shit ! *He exclaimed realizing Erin wasn't there anymore.* Do what you have to.

That's all he said before getting up and running to Erin's research. The task was arduous. Jay showed Lindsay's pic to the staff and the patients but nobody remembered seeing her. Jay blamed himself for falling asleep. He failed his protection's duty. What would he do if she had left the hospital ? Erin perfectly knew the streets, he didn't. He would never find her. If it was so, Voight would take care of him. Erin became a protected witness soon as her pimp was busted. Voight placed her under his protection because she was his CI but also for another reason that Jay didn't understand. He didn't have to fail so miserably. His gusts were telling him that Erin was still in the hospital. He just had to go to the checkpoint to make sure of this. He was going when he heard screams.

\_ Let me go ! I said let me go !

He recognized Erin's voice and immediately go that way. In the course of a corridor, he saw her. She was grappling with deux security agents. One of them was holding her somehow so she couldn't move. She was so hysterical that both of them couldn't control her. They tried to calm her down but she was still struggling to run away from them. She was screaming from the top of her lungs. A doctor had the bad idea to come with a needle, probably a sedative. Seeing him, Erin became even more hysterical. She was trying – in vain – to get free from the grip of the agents, asking the doctor not to come near her. Of course, nobody was listening to her. They were most likely thinking that she ran away from the psychiatric section. Jay stopped the doctor before he gets to Lindsay and forced him to back off. Then, he showed his badge to the agents.

\_ Detective Jay Halstead, she's under my responsibility.

\_ How to know if this is true ?

\_ Ask the reception.

Erin instantly calmed down when she heard Jay's voice. Now, she was struggling to meet him. Behind him, the doctor was calling the reception desk to check Jay's words. The agents were still trying to hold Erin who was giving them a really hard time punching, kicking and biting. One of them thought about using his tazer to force her to calm down but Jay's look was enough to dissuade him from doing so. The tension started increasing. If the confirmation didn't come quickly, there was going to be wounded people.



\_ The reception confirms, *said the doctor*.  
\_ Let her go, *ordered Jay*.

As soon as she was released, Erin came and hid behind him. The doctor left. The agents looked at Jay before leaving. When they were out of sight, Erin dove into Jay's chest and gripped to his sweat. She wasn't crying but was trying to pull herself together after this misfortune. Jay put his badge away and held her in his arms. She immediately felt better, more safe. She refused to move. However, Jay forced her to go back to the casualty department and to see her doctor again. On her demand, he stayed for the exam. The doctor made her sit down and looked at the move of her eyes with a flashlight then with his finger. Everything was okay. He then asked basic questions.

\_ What's your name ?  
\_ Erin Lindsay.  
\_ When were you born ?  
\_ April, 29th of 1985.  
\_ Do you know what day we are ?  
\_ August, 1st of 2015.  
\_ Do you know where you are ?  
\_ Chicago Med with detective Jay Halstead.  
\_ Everything seems normal to me, *said the doctor while writing it in Lindsay's medical file*. By precaution, you have to stay awake for the next twelve hours. It would be better if someone stayed with you.  
\_ I don't...  
\_ I'll stay with her.  
\_ Alright. Sign there and you'll be free to go.

Erin did so and watched the doctor leave the room. Jay took off his sweat and gave it to Lindsay so she could put it over the overall they had given to her to replace her T-shirt. The weather was hot but she liked the gesture. She felt less exposed that way. After signing exit papers, Erin followed Jay to his car. They both were surprise when they saw the patrol car stationned parked right in front of it. Erin immediately was on the alert and gripped Jay's arm while they were coming nearer. When a woman in uniform got out of the car, she instinctively placed her behind her protector. He won't let her take her right ? He said he would stay with her. He couldn't turn her in now. Why was his workmate here ? Erin had been busted in the past and she didn't like it. Voight was the one who had arrested her everytime. He made her go through Hell everytime. Erin was afraid this would happen again even if the officer didn't seem hostile to her.

\_ Burgess ?  
\_ The Sarge asked us to make a detour by here to see you.  
\_ There was a specific reason ?  
\_ He said you had to put her up and that I had to give you that bag.

She opened the trunk and got out a bag whom she gave to Jay. Understanding what it was about, he took it and thanked Burgess. In the next moment, she got back in the car and left in parol. Jay unlocked his vehicle, threw the bag at the back and opened the passenger's door. Erin got in without a word and watched him get behind the steering wheel. He stopped the car several times on the road. Supermarket, newsdealer, library, clothes store, telephone operator. Everytime, she was waiting for him in the car. She got anxious when she thought about going with him. What would people say when they'll saw her with him ? She was a girl of the night and her face was swelled and bruised since she had been beating up. During his excursions whom were filling the trunk, she was biting her nails and soul-searching.

Now that her pimp was in jail, she was free. He could go anywhere and even leave the city without problem. But she didn't have any money. He stole everything from her and she stopped dealing not long ago. She wanted to go back on the right track but how was it possible when you hardly know how to read and write ? A new future was opening to her but she couldn't appreciate it, too busy to run herself down. She would have liked being like Jay : a strong person you could fall back on in every circumstances and who was helping people in need. If she didn't had such a criminal record, she could have become a cop. She shook her head in front of her own stupidity. She ? A cop ? There was no way it would happen. The only thing she could do was joining a center or a clinic. And yet. Only her experience of the background would get her hired. For the rest, she wasn't better than the wrecks that were coming in those establishments. She was a wreck.

When he finished his purchases, he got back to his flat. He went straight to the guest room where he put the bag. Erin stayed in the entrance. She was embarrassed to get into his privacy. If she had been able to, she would have

run away. The only thing was she had nowhere to go. She couldn't go back in her district and she didn't have any friends to put her up. There was no way she would go back to Bunny. Her only solution was to stay here. She crossed her arms to stop biting her nails. She was looking at the place where she would live for a few days. The flat was big and bright. The living-room and the kitchen were separated by a counter. After those two rooms, there was the corridor where Jay disappeared. Erin sadly thought that if she had grown up in a flat like this, her life would probably have been better. It was sad to say. Jay interrupted her thoughts by carrying her in the corridor. He made her visit the place.

- \_ And, here, the guest room, *he said going back in again.* Well, your bedroom now.
- \_ I'll find myself a flat as soon as possible.
- \_ You're welcome here, Erin.
- \_ I don't wanna abuse your kindness.
- \_ It doesn't bother me, I swear.
- \_ ...
- \_ I promised to help you, I'll always do it.
- \_ Thank you, *she whispered.* Thank you for everything, Jay.
- \_ There are clean clothes in the bag. I'm gonna unload the car. Make yourself at home.

He smiled at her and pressed her shoulder before going back to the car. Erin hesitated and ended up searching in the bag. She took the more comfortable and locked herself in the bathroom. She didn't hurry to dry herself and get dressed. She slightly hesitated but looked her reflection in the mirror. She was shocked to see herself that disfigured. She had been weak, once again. She was tired of this reflection of her. She had to learn how to fight, how to become stronger. Then, she would never let anyone walk all over her. She looked away from her bruised reflection and finished to fit to be seen. Once she was ready, she go back in the living room. Jay was slaving over a hot stove. When he saw her come in, he put a full plate on the table and invited her to sit down. She realized how much she was starving when she obeyed. She even took a second helping. When she cleared her table, she saw a book on the newspaper of the day. She took it and slid her fingers on the letters of the cover.

- \_ Through The Storm, *she deciphered.* What is it ?
- \_ A book I loved when I borrowed it. I decided to buy it.
- \_ Is it good ?
- \_ Why would have I bought it otherwise ?
- \_ Logic. Sorry.
- \_ Don't apologize. You wanna read it ?

Erin didn't know how to answer. She wasn't able to read that book. She needed a better level of schooling. She had left school too early. She had tears in her eyes. How was she going to get away with so little knowledge ? She was good for nothing. Her hands were shaking on the book. She tried to hide it. Jay got up when he felt her discomfort. He forced her to face him and asked her what was wrong.

- \_ I... I'm not able to read a book like that.
- \_ Never mind.
- \_ I barely know how to read or write. How could I get away ?
- \_ I'm gonna read it to you.
- \_ Why ?
- \_ So you can understand why I love that book that much.
- \_ I'm a burden for you.
- \_ I'll learn you. If you want.
- \_ You would do that ?
- \_ Of course.
- \_ Do you have a favorite part ? In the book ?
- \_ « We don't die from it, we live with the pain. It's what worse in this. Your heart grows hollow with that huge emptiness which fills with the worst darkness, pushing you in your extreme entrenchments. And yet, we still don't give up. / Why ? / Because we always have a little ray of hope which tells us that everything's gonna be alright. We're not forced to believe it but she's always here. »
- \_ It's beautiful.
- \_ You'll love the book.

The talk over, they did the dishes and spent the day talking like to old friends meeting again. Jay noticed that Erin ran herself down a lot but promised to help her filling her gaps so she could build herself a new future. She

talked to him about the silly ideas she had but far from going her way, he told her that she would be a great cop. He didn't see her as a whore but as a strong and smart woman. With him, she felt like she could do something with her life. She only spent one day with him but she felt different. Jay was the first person to openly trust her and to believe in her. Without his support, she wouldn't be able to do anything. Without his support, she would end up giving up and would go back to her miserable life.

The night had fallen quickly. Erin and Jay had spent the evening watching movies and eating popcorn. Lindsay never went to the movie theater. She was discovering a version of this diversion with Jay. The latter was sat at the end of the couch. At the beginning of the evening, she was sat at the other end then, little by little, she laid down. Now, she was laid in fetal position and had her head on Jay's knees. He let her do. It was the end of their third movie and she started to feel tired. Jay was struggling against sleep for a while.

\_ You know, you can go to sleep if you want.

\_ Actually, you both should go, *said Jay looking at his watch*. It's been more than twelve hours now.

Erin nodded. Jay turned off the television and both of them went to sleep. If Jay fell asleep immediately, Lindsay didn't. Though she was exhausted, she couldn't find sleep. She had always hated being alone. The loneliness had always been one of her greatest fears and she knew it too well. She didn't feel it with Jay but now that they were in different rooms, she started to feel alone and vulnerable, empty again. That emptiness had often driven her to the worse but she promised not to do drugs again. Then, she was struggling and powerlessness tears were falling down her cheeks. She hated herself when she felt like that. She had always lived alone, had always managed by herself and, today, that was terrifying her. She needed to feel a human presence near her. Unsure of what she was doing, she got up and knocked on Jay's bedroom door. As he wasn't giving any answer, she slowly opened the door.

\_ Jay ? *She asked in a low voice*.

\_ Hmm.

\_ No, nothing. Sorry for waking you up.

\_ Lindsay, *Jay mumbled*.

\_ Sorry.

\_ Tell me what's wrong.

She couldn't. She wasn't able to explain it to him. She heard him move and saw him wave her to come. She obeyed and came into his bed, embarrassed. Jay came closer to her and held her in his arm. It was the straw that broke the camel's back. Erin burst into tears for good. He held her stronger, letting her cry to her heart's content. She talked only when she had calmed down.

\_ The most difficult to live, it's the emptiness, the loneliness.

\_ In this case, I will never let you alone, Erin Lindsay.

He kissed her on the forehead and slowly rubbed her back. Jay's words replaced the emptiness Erin was feeling. A diffuse heat filled her being while he was holding her against him. Reassured and comforted, she could fall asleep in the arm of her protector. It was her first true night of sleep for a long time.

×

Erin was sat down to the table in front of her breakfast when someone knocked on the door. She had woken up when she felt Jay's embrace come loose. He reassured her by saying he was going to cook the breakfast. She nodded and got up a few minutes after him. Her face and muscles were painful. Her head was still hurting but it was better than the day before. It was bearable. She rinsed her face with cold water to wake her up and erase the rigidity of her facial muscles. Then, she had met Jay in the kitchen and liked the gesture he had to put a mug of steaming coffee in front of her. She had smiled when she saw him get out some mass-produced pancakes from a closet while explaining himself on the fact that sometimes he didn't have the time to cook and that, anyway, those things were made for that. He didn't talk to her about what had happened during the night. She was relieved. The words he said were deeply anchored in her. She would never forget them.

\_ Halstead, *greeted the visitor when Jay had opened the door*.

She froze when she heard the voice of the newcomer. She knew it. Did Halstead know him ? Why did he come here ? She finished her breakfast listening closely not to miss a word of the two men's talking. The door shut down. He had come in.

- \_ Voight.
- \_ I came to see how she was doing.
- \_ Better. She won't have any sequelae. At least, not physically.
- \_ Who knows what this son of a bitch could have said or done to her ?

Jay shrugged and Voight followed him in the kitchen. Erin was pressing the empty mug in her hands. While Jay was pouring another coffee cup, she felt the sergeant's eyes on her. She felt anger increasing inside her. How did he know she was there ? Jay gave the cup to Voight who thanked him with a nod keeping his eyes on Erin. She didn't like him, she hated him. If Jay hadn't been there, she would have loved going for his throat.

- \_ Erin, this is...
- \_ Hank Voight, *she completed with a cold voice.*
- \_ Do you know each other ?
- \_ I arrested her in the past.
- \_ You were hassling me ! *She spit on.*
- \_ I wanted to help. Nuance.
- \_ I don't accept help from people I don't trust.
- \_ Erin, *said Jay while sitting next to her,* sergeant Voight is my boss. He can help you to change your life.
- \_ Do you trust him ?
- \_ I put my life in his hands everyday.

Though she was reluctant and suspicious, Erin accepted to believe in Jay's judgement and to let Voight help her. If he really could help her to become the person she wanted to be then she made a clean break with the past and gave in to his requirements. Even if she disliked it very much. She promised to rebuff him if he did any comment. She coldly looked at him for a while before Jay pushed her to talk. Voight and him listened to her without interruptions. Erin liked the fact that the sergeant stayed silent until she was done. He only talked after.

- \_ You wanna be a cop, Lindsay ?
- \_ That's a problem for you ? *She replied.*
- \_ Not at all. I need someone like you in my team.
- \_ Is that possible ?
- \_ I'll take care of her criminal record. I think Trudy would accept to take charge of her to train her.
- \_ Trudy ?
- \_ One the best in the district, *explained Jay.*

They spent the rest of the morning to talk about this project. There was no judgement. Erin was even happy to see that Hank agreed with her and that he promised her a spot in his team. A quick phone call to Trudy relieved her. She accepted to train her. Her new future was on the right track. Voight lunched with them and went back to the district to settle some details. Jay and Erin were alone again in the kitchen. He noticed that she was smiling and it warmed his heart.

- \_ Jay ?
- \_ Hmm ?
- \_ Promise me you never let me go.
- \_ Never. I will never leave you alone, Erin Lindsay. You will have me on your back everyday in your life.

Her smile widened when she heard him repeat the words he said the night before. In a night, everything changed for her. She was turning a new page in her life, she had an amazing friend who will never let her down and a future offer. She will never be alone again. He will never let her go. She couldn't help but hug him to thank him.