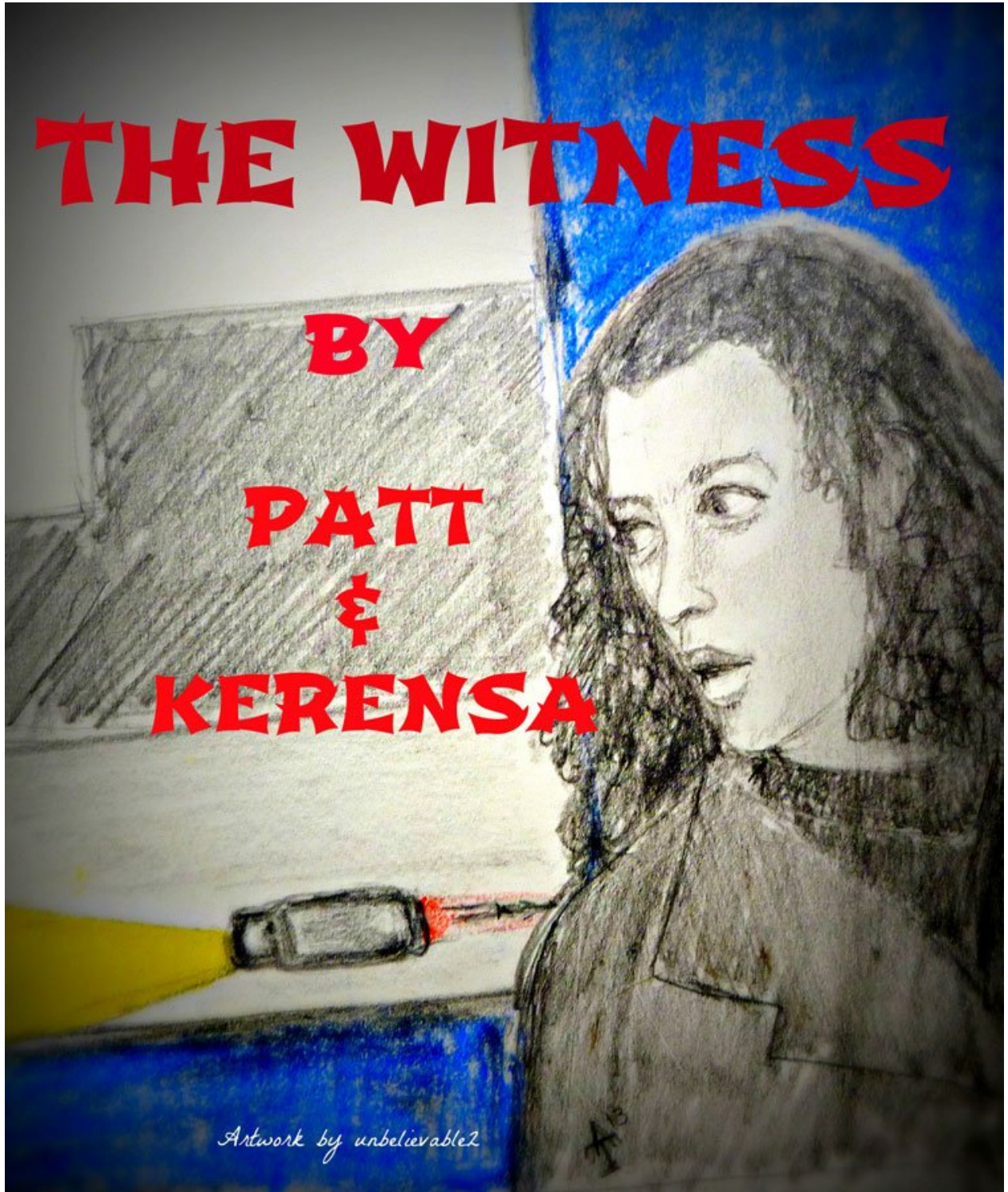


# THE WITNESS

BY

PATT  
&  
KERENSA

*Artwork by unbelievable2*



# The Witness

By Patt and Kerensa

When Blair left the university that night, he never expected to run into trouble, but trouble is exactly what he ran into. He parked after the semi-long drive home and looked up at his friend's warehouse; it had been cheaper than an apartment. His friend was letting him rent it for a really good price, but the lease was almost up. He knew that he was in no rush to go in, there was nothing to eat in the house and he had to do laundry tonight, if it killed him. He got out of his car, grabbed his backpack and lugged it into the warehouse. One would think he was 60 years old to watch him. He was so fucking tired. And carrying that lap top in his book bag didn't help anything.

Once he was in his huge warehouse, he set his backpack down on the table and walked into the kitchen for a beer. He opened up the fridge and realized, he not only didn't have food, but he didn't have anything to drink, either. He was going to have to make a run to the grocery store.

'Damn it, I was hoping I could grade papers and get some rest tonight,' Blair thought, his shoulders slumping in dejection.

He walked to the open windows in the front of the building and looked down to make sure it was safe to go outside. Just then he heard two male voices cursing and a girl screaming her head off. Then Blair heard a slap and the screaming stopped. Blair knew he had to do something and quick.

"911 emergency, my name is Nancy. Please state the nature of your emergency," a female voice calmly instructed him.

"My name is Blair Sandburg. There's an assault in progress in front of 227 Palm Avenue. Please send the cops right away! I have to go down there and help that woman," Blair practically shouted.

"No, sir, you stay right where you are and watch for a vehicle description or a description of the men. Shut the lights off in your apartment and look out the window very quietly," Nancy said.

"Nancy, I can't just leave her out there on her own," Blair pleaded.

"Blair, they might kill you if you witness something you shouldn't. The officers are on their way. Stay on the phone with me. You'll get through this, I promise."

Although it went against all of his instincts, Sandburg listened to the operator's advice. Blair ran to his bedroom and got his binoculars and started to look out the window with them. He saw two men walking up to a black Corolla, looking around to make sure there was no one watching them. Blair got a very good look at both of them. Then he guessed what the license plate number was, because he couldn't be sure in the dark. Blair leaned up against the wall next to the window so they wouldn't see his shadow with their headlights on as they drove out of the parking lot.



"Nancy, they're leaving. It's a black, four-door, Corolla. I got some of the license plate number, but couldn't see the rest of it." Blair rattled off the license and waited to see what Nancy said.

"Thank you, Blair. There are going to be officers there in a moment. You stay in your apartment, am I understood?" Nancy asked, sternly.

"I'm no hero. You don't have to worry about me going outside now. I see the cops, they're here. There are four patrol cars. I'll let you go. Thank you for everything, Nancy."

"Blair, stay on the line until the officer comes to your door and gives his name. I've been informed their names are Rafe and Brown. Don't let anyone else in, unless they are with Rafe and Brown, just to be on the safe side," Nancy instructed.

Blair answered, "Right, you've got it."

There was a knock at the door and a male voice, with the slightest of an accent, said, "Blair Sandburg, this is Detective Rafe from Cascade Police Department. Could you open your door so my partner and I can ask some questions?"

Blair opened the door and asked, "Could I see some ID, please?"

Rafe flipped his badge out and said, "This is my partner, Henri Brown. Are you still speaking with 911?"

"Good to meet you, Detective Brown. Yes, Nancy wants to talk to you." Blair handed the phone over to Rafe and waited for him to stop listening and start talking with Nancy.

Rafe handed the phone over to Blair and said, "That's all we needed Nancy for. Thank you for getting a description, part of the plate and staying up here instead of getting yourself killed downstairs," the good looking man said with a friendly smile. His partner, Detective Brown, gave the grad student a big, bright, every-tooth-showing, smile.

"You are most welcome. I sure didn't feel like dying tonight," Blair said in all honesty. "I'm going to get my sketch pad out and see if I can draw the faces while they are still fresh in my mind. Would that be all right?"

"You draw sketches?" Brown asked.

"I'm an anthropologist and part of what we do is we draw everything we find on a dig and that sometimes includes the people of the tribes. I'm not bad, at least, that's what several people have said. It might help the sketch artist you have at the station if I have a head's up on their description," Blair said.

"Go and get your pad and we'll be downstairs talking to the backup. We'll be back up here in about 20 minutes or so. Please stay here," Rafe ordered.

"I got it. I'm going to sit at the table and draw," Blair replied.

They walked through the door and Blair locked it behind them. Sandburg walked over to the window and glanced out; he saw all of the commotion outside and realized he hadn't even asked how the girl was.

'She must have gotten away,' he reasoned since the cops hadn't asked him any questions about her.

Blair sat at the table and drew as fast as he could. He was quite happy with the sketches, so far. He looked at his watch and realized it had been an hour since he had talked to them and still no Rafe and Brown. That was a lot longer than they said it would be and Blair was getting worried.

He set the finished sketches on the table and walked over to the window, again. Blair saw an ambulance with a stretcher parked right outside the doors, with a body bag lying on it.

'Oh shit. I didn't even ask about her. I thought she got away.' Blair felt his heart sink over the loss of life.

Blair went to the fridge and saw he had one half bottle of water left and drank it. For some reason his mouth was totally dry. He looked down at his hands and saw that they were shaking and realized he was scared.

There was a knock at the door. Blair walked over and asked, "Who is it?"

"Mr. Sandburg, it's Detective Henri Brown. Could you open the door, please?"

Blair did and found Rafe and Brown standing there with a very serious and good looking man behind them. While he wasn't conventionally handsome, like Detective Rafe, or had an infectious grin, the way Detective Brown did, his bright blue eyes, military short haircut and chiseled features drew Blair's attention like no other.

"Come in," Blair said as he opened the door.

"This is Detective Jim Ellison from our office. He's been on this case with us for five weeks now. We are lucky that you were home, because we've never had a witness before." The detective glanced over at the table and saw the pages lying there. "Did you draw the pictures?" Rafe asked.

"It's good to meet you, Detective Ellison. I'm Blair Sandburg. Please, just call me Blair." Blair walked over to the table and got the sketches and handed them to Jim Ellison.

"You're certain these are the men?" Ellison asked as he rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"Yes, I'm sure." Sandburg frowned at the other man. "Have you got a headache?" Blair asked, kindly.

"It doesn't matter." Ellison waved a hand dismissively. "Are you sure about these men? We've never had any clues to speak of and no witnesses." At Blair's nod, he continued, "You're going to be put in a safe house and under our protection during the course of this investigation. There really is no choice," Ellison said, when Blair looked as if he was going to protest.

"I see. So, tell me something, detective, do they have food at this safe house?" Blair asked very seriously.

Ellison couldn't help but like the curly haired man and let a hint of a smile cross his lips. "Yes, there is food and drink there. You just need to pack a bag and come with me," he instructed.

Blair took the drawings over to a copier that his friend kept in one corner of the living room and made copies for Rafe and Brown and an extra set for Ellison. "Here you go, just in case. I don't want anything to get screwed up. I feel so horrible that I didn't go down and save the girl."

"They would have killed you, Blair," Ellison said.

"I guess so, but I feel bad for not even trying. Was she young?" Blair wondered, glancing up at Ellison.

"About 30, does that matter?" Ellison asked.

"It's way too young to die. Especially all alone. She was my age," Blair muttered quietly to himself as he went in to the bedroom area to pack his bag.

The three men discussed things until Blair came out with everything he thought he would need for the next several days. He grabbed his backpack and the duffle bag and said, "Okay, that's everything. I guess that I'm ready whenever you are."

"It was good talking with you Rafe and Brown. We'll see you at the station in a few minutes," Ellison said.

"Sounds, good, Jim. See you there," Brown answered as everyone walked out the door.

\*

At the station, Jim took Blair's statement, getting his take on everything that he had seen and heard. There were, of course, numerous forms that had to be filled out and, naturally, Jim was writing everything down and would type it up for Simon Banks, his boss, later on.

Rafe came walking into the bullpen and said, "I have the sketch artist in Interrogation Room One. Can I borrow Sandburg for a while?"

"Sure, Sandburg, follow Rafe and see if the artist comes up with the same type of drawings you did. Good luck," Jim suggested.

After about an hour, Blair came back to Jim's desk and sat down. "Hey man, good news. The sketch artist's renditions ended up looking just like mine. The sketch artist said that I did a great job with them and told me I have a really good memory."

Jim Ellison nodded as the younger man talked. Internally, he wondered why he was staring at Blair more than he would normally stare at a witness. There was something about him that drew the detective in. Maybe it was the long, curly hair that seemed to have a life of its own and was comprised of at least 17 different colors—he'd stopped counting. Possibly it was the cobalt blue eyes that sparkled and looked at Jim like he was the answer to all of the questions in the universe.

'Or maybe he's just cute,' Ellison thought with an internal shrug.

Jim shook his head to get the distracting thoughts out of it and got back to work on typing the report into the computer. Once it was finished, he printed it up, had Sandburg sign it, and knew they would be safe to leave for the time being.

"Hey Jim, they found the car with the partial plates. It was stolen, no surprise there. So, we have nothing to go on but the sketch, as of now," Brown said.

"At least we have that," Jim answered as he got up and motioned for his witness to stand up. "Come on, Sandburg, let's get to the safe house."

\*

The drive to a safe house was quiet. Blair, who could normally get a monk, nineteen years into an Oath of Silence, to talk, just didn't know what to say or do. So he sat in the car and watched Detective Ellison out of the corner of his eye.

'Not that that's a hardship,' Blair admitted to himself as he surreptitiously took in the detective, who was more than easy on the eyes.

Ellison said, "You can call me Jim, by the way. No one calls me Detective Ellison around here."

"Thanks, Jim. Where are we going?"

"I have a loft that is a perfect setup for a safe house," Jim said.

"Your own home?" Blair asked, his blue eyes widening at the prospect of being in such close quarters with the other man.

"Yep. I figured they wouldn't think to look for you there," Ellison answered.

"Oh-kay," Sandburg drawled. At the quick glance that Ellison gave him, the anthropologist went on to elaborate. "I guess that I just don't understand why you have to put me in a safe house, at all. I mean, they don't even know about me," Blair questioned.

"But they will as soon as word gets out that there was a witness and since there are two of them, they'll no doubt give an alibi for each other. So it's going to be your word against theirs, unless we can find some good physical evidence to back up your statement."

"Well, I sure hope you find some evidence. Being on the run is, like, not on my list of priorities for this year."

Jim nodded his head in agreement. "Being in hiding is nothing like they show in the movies, that's for sure."

Blair tucked a lock of hair behind his ear with the edge of his thumb and chewed his lip thoughtfully.

"You know, it's weird but did you notice that they look somewhat alike?" Blair asked.

Jim turned to Blair and said, "Yes, your drawings definitely suggest a family resemblance that's unusual, because sexual homicides are usually committed by a single perpetrator. To have two family members committing these crimes together, and both so careful that they don't leave any clues, is unique."

"I wish you luck on it. I know it's bothering you because you keep pinching the bridge of your nose, so I know you have a headache. Is there anything I could do to help?"

Jim sighed. "Thanks, but I doubt you can do anything. I've been to four doctors and not one of them can tell me anything about the trouble I'm having with my senses."

"Oh really?" Blair asked, trying not to get too excited about it. "So, how many of your senses bother you?" The anthropologist tried to keep from sounding eager even as he mentally crossed his fingers.

"All five of them, and let me tell you, it's a pain in the ass. Right now, I would give anything to eat a chili cheese burger from Wonderburger, but I can't. It burns the hell out of my tongue and lips."

Blair nodded in understanding and Jim was mesmerized by the sway of his brown/gold/bronze colored hair. "Listen, let's stop at Wonderburger, get one for both of us, and I'll tell you about something I've been studying my entire life. I have some ideas on how to help you control your senses and I promise you, you'll be able to eat the food tonight," Blair suggested.

Ellison's eyebrows shot up at the anthropologist's declaration; even though he was skeptical, the detective was ready to try anything. "You got it, I'm all ears," Jim said as he drove in the direction of Wonderburger.

So, as they drove, Blair went on to tell him about his Sentinel studies and what you could do to help control them. He talked for the next thirty minutes while Jim listened fixedly. Sandburg told him how he would teach him about the dials and in no time and he would feel better about everything. He also told him about focusing too much on one sense and zoning out. Blair went on to explain why this would be a bad thing.

"So tell me, Blair, how do you know this stuff and doctors don't?" Jim asked.

"It's my field, man. Don't be so hard on them. They like to find things they can cure. This isn't going to go away and in time, you will be able to control it with ease. But you might keep in mind that you need a Guide, that's someone to have your back if you slip into a zone. It's always a good idea."

Bearing all of this in mind, Jim pulled into the Wonderburger drive thru and ordered French fries and a chili cheese burger for himself, a regular Wonderburger and onion rings for Blair, and a large soda for each of them. Jim was really hoping that Blair wasn't just blowing smoke up his ass about all this; it almost made the detective cry when he had to throw out perfectly good Wonderburgers just because he can't handle them.

Ellison was distracted on the way home. Their food smelled good, but at the same time, vaguely nauseating. Jim crossed his fingers—mentally—because he really didn't want to eat a bowl of bland oatmeal again tonight.



When they arrived at the loft, Blair was shocked. He had been expecting something a little trendier for this man. Jim carried their food in, while Blair carried his backpack and his duffle bag. When they walked in, Blair was shocked at how clean and pristine it looked. It's not like the grad student had expected a pig sty, but the room was so neat that it seemed sterile. Actually, to Blair, it looked like no one lived there at all.

"Nice place, Jim."

"Thank you, it's not new, but I like the area and the view. The balcony is great for watching stars. I have a telescope there that you might want to check out while you're here, as long as I check it out first."

"Cool," Blair stated, giving the balcony a quick glance. He hoped it wouldn't bother him too much, what with his fear of heights. "Uhm. So, where am I going to bunk?" Blair asked, looking just a tad nervous, especially since he was hoping Jim was going to invite him upstairs first thing.

"Over here. It's not a huge room or anything, but comfortable and cozy. I hope you'll like it," Jim said as he grabbed Blair's duffle bag.

"Wow, this is nice, Jim. I like the idea of a desk and all. I still have to teach my classes so I'll have papers to grade," Blair explained.

"Someone will have to be with you all day while you teach and drive you back here. Speaking of that, here is a key to my place. Make yourself at home. Now, could you show me how I'm going to eat all this food I picked up?"

"All right, close your eyes. Now, picture a set of dials in your head," Blair instructed. "Have you got it?"

"Yeah," Ellison said hesitantly.

"Okay, good." Sandburg licked his lips nervously; he had wracked his brain all the way to the eatery and then to the loft. Blair hoped that the plan he'd come up with would actually work. "Now, turn the one labeled smell down a notch at a time until the odors from the food we got doesn't bother you." Blair waited a few moments. "Okay, now do the same with taste." When the lines of tension had lessened on the Sentinel's face, Blair grinned and handed Jim his food.

"How do you feel now, Jim?"

"I feel great, Blair. The headache is gone. Let's eat."

The detective pulled a French fry out of the bag and took a tentative bite; his body was tensed, as if waiting for a blow. He slowly chewed and swallowed the piece of potato and then waited. After a bit, the older man smiled at Blair.

"Wow, Chief. That tasted good. Not too salty or greasy."



Blair smiled as Ellison dug into the bag for ketchup and his chili cheese burger. Not surprisingly, the fastidious man spread his feast out very neatly over two napkins. Picking up the burger in both hands—it was a very big burger—the detective took a deep breath, inhaling the mingled scents of the meat, chili, cheese and onions.

The older man's eyelids fluttered as Blair's got progressively wider. Jim opened his mouth and took a huge bite.

"Mmmm. Mmm. Mmmmm."

Sandburg swallowed hard at the appreciative noises that Jim was making. It wasn't hard to imagine other reasons for those sounds. Ellison licked his lips, getting the dab of chili at the corner of his mouth. Blair unconsciously licked his own lips. He took a sip of his soda, trying to wet his suddenly dry throat. Another French fry, this one positively dripping with ketchup, was slid appreciatively into the Sentinel's mouth.

"Mmmmm. Oh man, Chief, that is goooood."

It was several more bites before the distracted detective looked over at his companion. Ellison frowned when he noticed that Blair wasn't eating.

"What's the matter? Aren't you hungry?" Jim asked Blair, who nodded distractedly.

"Sure. Yeah."

'Not really,' he thought to himself. 'Although I might need a cigarette.'

Blair didn't say what he was really thinking though and started in on his own dinner. However, he did keep an eagle eye on Ellison while he ate.

Just to make sure that his senses didn't bother him, dontcha know.

\*

Jim found himself being able to eat everything he had bought and enjoyed the hell out of it. "Thank you, Blair, you just saved my life." Ellison glanced around the sterile room and admitted, "I was almost insane."

"But yet you still took me into your home and made me feel safe. You're a born protector, Jim. That's what Sentinels do."

"I think I'm going to call you Chief as a nickname."

Blair's face took on pinkish hue at the idea of the Sentinel giving him a nickname. Blair had, of course, noticed the name earlier, but had assumed that the detective had slipped and called him by a name intended for one of his friends.

"You'll be the new person in charge of my new life. Do you suppose that you could be my Guide, too?"

'Please say yes,' Jim thought as he mentally crossed his fingers.

"Yes! Yes!" Blair thought enthusiastically, although his face didn't show it.

"I think I might be, Jim. Fate seems to have brought us together. I just wish no one had to die to do it. I've never seen a dead person before and I admit that I'm still a little nervous about all of it."

"I think you might be in shock. That's understandable. I know that I was a wreck the first time I saw someone die. You rest knowing that I'll be watching out over you the entire time. Try not to worry, okay?"

As if Ellison's suggestion triggered a Pavlovian response, Blair yawned and looked over at Jim. "Sorry, man, it's been a really long day. Do you suppose I could turn in for the night?"

"Hey, no problem, and just think of this as your home and do whatever you want. There are all sorts of snacks in the pantry if you get hungry and bottled water, beer, juices and soda are in the fridge," Jim said.

"Thanks again, Jim. I'll see you in the morning."

"Goodnight, Chief," Jim called out to Blair's retreating form.

Jim wished they had met under different circumstances, because he would love to take one Blair Sandburg out for dinner and dancing. 'Keep your head straight, Ellison. He's not a boy toy that you can use and dump. This is your job, nothing else.'

\*

The next day, Brian Rafe was Blair's bodyguard. He spent the whole day with Blair at the University which was absolutely riveting. Rafe got to follow the younger man around campus, to his classroom, his office, the library...the bathroom. The handsome detective decided that he'd had more fun that time that he had to stay on a stake out, for two days...beside a dumpster.

Blair got all of his grading done that morning, several meetings with struggling students and got a good start on an article that he was writing for the Anthropological Journal, so he was ahead of the game. However, Rafe was a grouch, so Blair hoped that Jim would be able to take over soon.

The grad student found it odd that Jim hadn't called him not even to let him know how the case was going, or anything about the case, but then again, maybe that was normal. Sandburg realized that Ellison was probably bound by rules and laws that prohibited him from talking about an active case, even, or maybe even, especially, to a witness.

'I wonder what's happening. I sure hope the police find out who those men are, and soon. They are cold blooded killers and I don't mind admitting that I'm afraid they might realize who I am,' Blair admitted to himself.

\*

"So the car was stolen?" Simon confirmed. Jim nodded, which caused the captain to sigh and rub a hand across his forehead.

"Yes, we now have to go back to the very beginning, start all over and do some fast footwork. We'll pass out the sketches right away, give them to all of the cops on the street and have them show them around," Jim answered. "Maybe somebody's snitch will recognize the duo."

"Yeah, maybe." Banks tapped his finger against his desk thoughtfully. "Did Sandburg seem like a credible witness?" Simon asked.

"Yes, he's very credible. Sandburg is a well-respected member of academia; he's been in college since he was 16 years old. He hasn't had any trouble with the law, not so much as a traffic ticket. There are no worries there."

Banks trusted his detective, so he changed the subject, slightly. "So, you have him staying at the loft?" Ellison nodded. "Jim, are you certain you know what you're doing?" Simon asked. "I know the guy seems fine, but you can't be 100% sure he's not involved in some way. After all, the best defense is to turn around and say that you are a witness."

Jim shook his head. "There's no way he was involved, sir. Officers were on the scene in a matter of minutes, he wouldn't have had time to clean up." Simon nodded thoughtfully, again silently agreeing with his best detective. "As for him staying at the loft with me, I think he'll be safer there. We know that word is going to get out and, by process of elimination, these guys are going to know that Sandburg is the only witness and they'll want to take care of him."

"I would like to talk to him, myself," Simon stated. "It's possible that with another person questioning him, Sandburg might remember more details."

"I suppose," Ellison admitted reluctantly. He glanced down at the file on Simon's desk. The very thin file. Jim stood up abruptly and started to pace the room. "I don't like this, sir. It's a pretty safe bet that they'll find out about Sandburg being a witness and then he'll be in danger. What do we have for evidence from the body of the young lady? Why aren't we looking for evidence the old fashioned way?"

Simon sighed. "Jim, I just wanted to meet him and see if he knows his stuff. I don't wish to endanger his life at all. No one knows about him yet and as far as the evidence goes, the coroner said that she was raped multiple times but there was no semen in her vagina. She was raped before they strangled her. We have to get some type of evidence to get these men locked up."

"Simon, come over to the loft later tonight and you can meet him there. Let's keep his face out of the system as much as we can."

"I'll do that and in the meantime, I hope you'll find something we can go on besides an ID from Sandburg, Jim."

"Yes, sir. I'll talk to you later. I need to find some clues."

"Good luck, Jim," Simon said as he closed the door to his office.

\*

After stopping at the morgue to talk to Dan Wolfe, who unfortunately had nothing new to add, Jim stopped by the University to see if Blair was still teaching his class. He got there and saw Rafe's SUV and knew that he was at the right place. Jim made his way to the front desk and asked for directions to Blair Sandburg's office. He got two sets of directions, from two different women, and Jim ended up very confused, to say the least. But he ended up finding the office, fairly easy, by using his sense of smell. The Sentinel followed what he had come to recognize as Blair's own unique scent. He knocked on the office door, which was labeled Artifact Storage Room #3, and walked in and found no one there. He cleaned a place off on the chair and sat down waiting for Blair to return. He listened to see what was going on out in the hallway, but it was just young people, there was no threat to Blair.

\*

Blair was a nervous wreck all morning as he taught his class. He kept worrying that those two men would find out that he was the one that fingered them and they would come after him for sure. Once

his classes were done, he hurriedly walked to his office with Rafe in tow. When he got there, he smiled at Rafe and said, "Here is a chair, you can wait for me out here in the hallway."

Blair walked into his office and shut the door and smiled when he saw Jim sitting there. He was a sight for sore eyes.

"Hey Jim, what's going on?"

"I wanted to tell you that there is no news yet. We are going to start passing the composite drawings around to the beat cops to start with and hope for a lucky break. I just wanted to check on you and see if Detective Rafe is taking good care of you. I still need to go to the murder site, but I want you to go to the loft with Rafe and wait for me." Ellison watched, eyebrows raised, as the younger man began to shake his head in the negative.

"No way, man. As a Sentinel, you're a human crime lab, Jim. I'm going to go with you to the murder site and with me there to help keep your senses under control, I have no doubt that we'll find something you can use. These senses of yours can be wonderful, you just wait and see," Blair said, sounding a lot more excited than he should be.

"Do you really think we could find some clues there? I mean, I would like to think I'm a good detective with or without the senses. But with them, it seems like I would have a much better chance of finding something there that someone missed."

"You are so right, Jim. By the way, why doesn't the FBI have the case instead of just the cops? Is it a secret or something?" the younger man asked curiously.

"No, it's not a secret. For one thing, murder and rape are not crimes that are covered by the FBI, not unless the perpetrators cross state lines. But, more importantly, one of the women who was killed was related to the police commissioner and he asked us to look into it. We didn't fight it because we knew the police might have a better chance if it stayed in our hands. The FBI and Cascade Police are always trying to outdo the other one."

"I see. Okay, give me a minute and I'll be ready to go in no time flat. Just let me get my things," Blair said, as he gathered papers, books and his laptop and stuffed them all into a worn out looking backpack.

"Maybe we could go and check out the crime scene, first thing. You could help me focus my senses and maybe I can find something to tie to these guys that you saw. We really need to stop these men. This is the fifth woman in five weeks," Jim said. "I feel like its escalating."

"I'm ready when you are. Let's leave Rafe here, though. We don't want him asking why I'm in on this investigation. Right?"

Jim smiled at Blair. "You are so right. I'll tell him to go home now. Come with me."



When they arrived at the crime scene, Blair was a little nervous and Jim could tell. The closer they got to the crime scene tape, which was still fluttering gently in the wind, the slower Sandburg began to walk.

“Don’t worry, Chief, I’m not going to let anyone hurt you in any way. You’ll be with me the entire time.”

They both got out of the SUV and found Rafe and Brown there. Jim must have been driving slowly, because Rafe beat him to the crime scene. Ellison frowned, the idea of sending Rafe home was so that the detective wouldn’t see Blair there or notice Jim using his senses in an unusual way.

Rafe said, “We’re just here making sure we didn’t forget to log anything, because as it is we don’t have a thing.” The handsome man frowned when he spotted Blair, their witness, at the crime scene. He glanced over at his partner, Henri Brown, to see if he thought it was odd, but from the look on the genial man’s face didn’t seem like he saw anything untoward.

“Don’t mind us. We’re doing the same thing. You do your thing and we’ll do ours,” Jim said as he and Blair walked over to where the girl was found and Jim started looking for clues.

Blair gave a quick glance back to make sure that the other detectives were far enough away before he whispered, "Now, focus on smell first. Take out Brown, Rafe and our smells and see if anything seems familiar. And don't focus too much on smell at one time or you'll zone. Listen to Brown and Rafe at the same time, okay?"

"Got it, Chief."

Jim turned his back on Rafe and Brown and closed his eyes. He concentrated on nothing but smell, but also listened to the two men talking at the same time. Jim took their scents out and then his and Blair's and was left with a very odd smell.

"I smell some aftershave that isn't from any of us and then I smell finger print solution. Why would the killers have that?" Jim wondered. "I also smell a Polaroid camera."

"Maybe that's how they keep trophies. They leave nothing at the site for us to find, but they take away trophies. The Polaroid camera makes sense," Blair said. "Remember that you can't say anything about this to Rafe and Brown. So you can only say you smelled it, but don't know why. We have to keep this a secret for the time being, Jim. So you're just guessing. They won't question that, will they?"

"They shouldn't. Don't worry so much, Blair. I'll keep it very quiet, except for when I tell Simon about it."

Jim then focused on sight and looked for anything that was out of the ordinary. He saw a very slight crack in the foundation next to the wall where she was found and saw something clear sticking out. He put his gloves on and pulled out two pair of gloves. "Chief, they left these behind, probably in a hurry and will come back for them, thinking we'll never find them. This is the first break we've had since this happened. Rafe! Brown! Come and look at what I found."

Rafe and Brown hurried over and Rafe said, "Holy shit, did we all miss that?"

Jim showed them where he found it. He then told them about the fingerprinting ink that he could smell and the ink from the Polaroid camera.

Brown said, "This is good, isn't it? Will we have enough for a search warrant once we figure out who did this?"

"Should have," Jim answered.

"I might not be in harm's way, then," Blair said.

"Until those men are found, you are in harm's way. You'll continue to stay at the loft with me, as planned," Jim said sternly.

"I totally agree with Jim, Sandburg. Until these guys are behind bars, you can't chance letting them know where or who you are," Rafe said.

Brown grinned at all of them and said, "Let's all take the gloves in."



Jim smiled. "Sounds good to me. Come on, Chief."

Jim put the gloves in a bag and they all got in their vehicles and drove to the station house. On the way, Blair decided to ask a few questions.

"Hey Jim, do you ever see guys?" Blair asked, blushing.

"I see guys every day of the week," Jim teased.

"Seriously, I would like to ask you out once this is all said and done," Blair said nervously.

"No need to be nervous around me, Chief. I've been drawn to you since the first moment I saw you. And yes, I do date guys," Jim answered.

"Thank God for that," Blair answered.

The two of them had small talk all the rest of the way to the station.

\*

Across the street from the crime scene sat a fancy SUV that had Mitchell Sawyer and his son, Ryan, in it. Looking through a pair of binoculars, he saw that the police had found the gloves. He knew they would have to run and keep hidden until they got rid of the evidence. Mitchell had taken plenty of money out of the bank for an emergency, so he and Ryan could hide out in Seattle if need be. No one was going to take them alive. In fact, he might even sail somewhere on his yacht. Mitchell wasn't going to give up his son that easily.

\*

Jim took the gloves to forensics and told them he needed a rush job on it. He told them how important the gloves were to the case and the tech said she would have them done in an hour.

Everyone waited upstairs for the results and had a cup of coffee. Simon came walking out of his office and said, "There were good clean prints on the inside of the gloves and we have a name. Mitchell Sawyer and he has a son named Ryan Sawyer. We just got a judge to sign off on a search warrant. Go look at his house and see if he has any other property in town or out of town. We'll get the search warrants sent for the other houses, if there are any. Put out an APB on the man and the vehicle that he drives. Maybe we'll get lucky."

"Thank you, sir," Jim said grabbing Blair and walking out of the room. "Come on, Chief. Let's get this show on the road."

"Jim, do you know where all of his property is already?" Blair asked, puzzled at how fast Ellison was moving, especially considering that they had just gotten a name to go on.

"No, but I'm going to look now. If there is more than one place, we'll let Rafe and Brown tackle some of them. Maybe we'll get really lucky," Jim said hopefully. Jim typed in the information and waited for the

computer to spit out what he needed to help with the case. Within moments, he had three houses listed, along with their addresses. One of them was in Seattle, but the other two were in Cascade. Jim printed them up as quickly as he could and decided that they might need Joel Taggart in on this too. He could put the APB out on the two men and their vehicle and help in different ways at the station.

"Simon, do you suppose Joel and Megan could take care of things at the station, like the APB and getting the sketches out?" Jim asked.

"Good idea, I'll call Seattle PD right away and ask them to look at the house there. That will save us time. Jim, I want you to take a pair of officers with you when you go. In fact, Rafe and Brown, you do the same thing. I don't want you doing this alone. We know they are dangerous and know what they're doing. We have to stay one step ahead of them."

Jim turned to Brown and Rafe and handed them the second page with an address. "Stop by and get a copy of the correct warrant and let's get this finished. We'll get some officers downstairs when we go."

Jim and Blair walked downstairs and Blair was excited, yet scared. He didn't know where he belonged on this.

Jim suddenly stopped and turned to him and said, "I'm going to leave you with Detective Miller. He's a pretty good guy and he'll keep an eye on you. You'll stay here at the station, they would never come here. Are you all right with that?"

"Man, that sounds good. This was getting a little scary to me," Blair admitted.

"Let's get up there and get you introduced to Miller. His name is Mark," Jim added.

Jim introduced them to each other and Miller promised to take very good care of Blair. So Jim left, feeling like Blair was in safe hands. Simon caught up with him and said, "I'm going along with you, Jim."

"That's fine, Simon. I could use all the help I can get. Blair should be safe here, right?" Jim felt odd about leaving him with someone he didn't work with a lot.

"Sandburg should be just fine, Jim. Let's find us a killer and find out what his son has to do with it."

The two men walked downstairs and found four officers that would go along with them. Then Jim drove his SUV to the first Sawyer home and they gained entry, quite quickly when the maid answered the door and let them in. All they had to do was show the search warrant and people did what they were supposed to do.

The six men started searching for anything and everything. Jim found Sawyer's office first thing and went in and found records of the other property, including the one in Seattle. Jim took notes as to anything that would help with the case, although nothing was really jumping up and talking to him at that point. He then tried the computer and found out that Mitchell Sawyer had taken a lot of money out of his bank yesterday, so he must have been planning for this, just in case. Then Jim found a safe that was open and in there were still photos of the women he had killed. Jim was getting more nervous

as he looked at everything. This man had planned everything, in advance. He knew the chances he was taking and he probably already knew about Blair. Jim pulled his cell out and called Miller. No one answered and that wasn't what Jim wanted to hear.



“Simon, I can’t get a hold of Miller. I need you to call and see where he is. Everyone will listen to you easier than me. I have a bad feeling about this. I wonder how they knew about Blair so quickly. It’s almost like there was a leak at the station.”

Simon pulled out his phone and walked away from Jim. He didn't know that Jim could hear him from another room. Jim listened as the officer at the station said Miller was killed outside of the station house and Sandburg was taken hostage. Simon didn't know how he was going to explain that to Jim. He turned around and saw Jim getting ready to go.

"I heard, we need an APB out on Sawyer's SUV and need to get Blair found before they kill him." Jim walked out the door and Simon followed, in shock.

"Jim, how do you know what happened?"

"Because I have really good hearing. I was going to tell you about it next week. But we didn't get that far. Blair says I'm like a human crime lab. Now, let's see if he's right," Jim said as he dashed out to his SUV.

Simon stopped long enough to tell the cops to keep up what they were doing. He told them to call if they found anything out of the ordinary. Then he hurried to get into Jim's SUV as Jim started to take off.

"Slow down, Jim. You're not going to save Blair from anything if we're both dead."

"Got it. Slowing down. I'm going to the docks to see if they have Blair on their yacht. I can't think of anywhere else he could be."

"Jim, we can slip in, and you use that hearing of yours and see if he's there. Can you do that?"

"Yes, I can do that. I shouldn't have left him at the station, Simon."

"No time for worrying about what you should have done or not, it's too late. Now, we just need to figure out where he is and save his ass. I don't believe there is a leak at the station, so I have to believe that they were just watching us this entire time and saw who was involved or not," Simon said.

\*

Simon called the station and asked for Joel. The other captain was a good man, reliable and calm in a crisis.

"Taggart."

"Joel, we need an APB put out on the SUV that belongs to the Sawyers. You'll find all of the information in the computer. Do you know what happened to Detective Miller yet?"

"He and Blair were having dinner at the diner across the street and were on the way back, that's when he was shot and killed. No one was out in front of the station, so there were no witnesses at the station, but we have the witnesses at the diner, and they said that Blair was taken," Joel explained.

"You and Connor keep things going at the station. I'm going to the docks with Jim right now to see if they have Sandburg on their yacht. Keep me posted with any news," Simon said.

After Simon got off the phone, he turned to Jim and said, "Everything will be taken care of at the station, now we just need to find Sandburg."

"I didn't even think about calling the station. I'm not on my game tonight," Jim admitted.

"You've got other things on your mind. Right now, tell me about the hearing situation so I can understand what's going on."

Jim drove as quickly as he could without killing them and said, "I not only can hear things that no one else can, but I can see things too. I can see for a long way. I don't need binoculars anymore. It's wonderful to have someone that understands these senses like Blair does. He's explained it all to me and I am what he calls a Sentinel. He would be my Guide. I need someone to back me up and make sure that I don't zone. That's what happens when I focus too much on one sense. He's taught me to use two senses at a time so I don't zone like I used to. Remember how I told you that I was losing periods of time every day? Well, that's a zone. It would remind a person of a seizure of some kind. But once I'm in complete control I don't have to worry about zoning as much. I'm afraid, to start off with, but I might need Blair by my side at the station. You might want to think about that, Simon. I need him in order to learn how to cope with these senses better. I know all of this sounds crazy, but I swear it's the truth. Blair will explain things to you even more when we find him and get him out of there safely. "

Simon found this entire story a little hard to believe, but yet, Jim was indeed working better since Blair had come on board. Maybe there was something to this Sentinel and Guide thing. They pulled up with lights off at the boat docks and parked quietly.

"Be very quiet, Simon. I'm going to try and hear Blair."

Jim closed his eyes and concentrated. By slowly focusing, and having one hand rub against the nap of his suede jacket to keep him from focusing too much, the Sentinel listened and could hear Blair talking to the older Sawyer.

"Why are you doing this?" Blair asked.

"You would never understand. You don't have a son," Sawyer spat out hatefully.

"Someday I would like to have a son, so explain to me why you've done this with your son," Blair lied. The anthropologist in him really wanted to know what had happened to start this.

"Ryan, my son, had a sister who was 12 years old and he was attracted to her, so one night he forced himself on her and she put up a fight and Ryan strangled her. What was I going to do? I couldn't turn in my last living child to the police. So I helped my son dispose of the body and contacted the police saying that Shawna ran away. They found her three weeks later and there was nothing ever found on her case. They didn't even suspect us, because we were each other's alibi. Then Ryan couldn't stop. He had to kill more girls after he raped them. I just took pictures and prints. I never took part in the actual rape or strangulation. That was all Ryan's doing. He's a very confused soul. It's not his fault, really, it isn't."

Blair just sat there quietly absorbing everything that they had said and finally said, "Why didn't you try to get him help? You could have stopped him right after your daughter. And what about your daughter, man? He raped and murdered your other child."

"I knew you wouldn't understand. But understand this; I will kill you in two seconds if they come after my son. Now, I need to calm Ryan down before he kills you right now. I need to keep you alive for a while longer," Mitchell said as he walked into the next room and tried to calm down his ranting son.

\*

"Simon, we need a SWAT team out here. He's in there and the men he's with are insane. Ryan, the son, wants to kill Blair right now and he's fighting with his dad over keeping him alive. Make the call, please?" Jim pleaded.

Simon pulled out his phone and called the station and got everything ordered. They were coming in quiet and would have time to set up before they might get a crack at the Sawyer men.

Jim went back to listening and heard Blair whisper, "Jim, I don't know if you're out there or not, but I have to hope you are. I just wanted to tell you that I've enjoyed working with you and I like you very much, both as a policeman and as a man. I was really hoping that I would have time to spend with you. I felt like there was something between us, besides being Sentinel and Guide. I'm sorry that we'll never know. I really, really like you."

"What can you hear now?" Simon asked.

"Blair. He's saying goodbye to me. Simon, we have to go in there and try and get him out. It's the least we could do for him. He deserves it. Let's get down there and see what we can see," Jim said, sadly.

"Listen and see if you hear SWAT yet. They would do a much better job," Simon assured Jim.

Jim listened and said, "They're here. They're getting set up now and they know who the players are. Blair might be safe now. I wish we could have been the ones to go in and get him."

"Don't give up already, Jim. At least give him a fair chance at surviving this ordeal."

"I'll try. They're getting into place now. The perps have a gun aimed at Blair's head, so this isn't going to be easy," Jim said, sounding scared for the first time.

Jim listened again and heard Blair whispering. "Jim, I'm going to make a dive for cover and hope you're out there. God, I hope you're out there, or they'll kill me right away. Either way, it's been great knowing you. I loved spending time with you. And if I live through this, you owe me a nice dinner out."

Jim heard the snipers on the radio saying, "Now."

There were shots heard and, for a moment, Jim was afraid to listen to see if Blair was alive. But he swallowed hard and forced himself to listen anyhow.

"I'm alive, Jim. I'm alive. You owe me dinner."

Jim smiled over at his captain and said, "They must have gotten the Sawyers because Blair is alive and telling me I owe him dinner out. SWAT is going in right now and Blair is throwing a fit because they don't know where I am yet."

Simon smiled at Jim. "I'm glad it worked out for everyone. Now, get down there, so he doesn't yell at the SWAT guys."

Blair was walking down the walkway with some SWAT characters, waving his hands and telling some story when he saw Jim. He stopped talking and started running for Jim. Jim hugged him when he got to him and said, "Good job, Chief."

"I knew you would find me. I knew it," Blair said, hugging Jim back.



"I didn't really find you. This was the only place left I had to check for the Sawyers. Don't give me that much credit. I was at their house until I heard about you being abducted. Then my brain went into overdrive. By the way, I really like spending time with you, too. I really, really like you, Blair."

Blair smiled as he looked back and saw the team members taking in the Sawyers alive and well. They hadn't had to kill them after all. They gave up easily. The trial would hopefully give some closure to the victim's families.

Simon walked over to Blair and said, "How would you like to have a ride along status with Major Crimes? Although, you would be working with other people, not just Jim," Simon warned him. "I think everyone would figure it out about Jim if you stayed with him alone. This would be a paid position and I know that you're a teacher, so we could work out the schedule when the time came. I've got to get it approved by the Police Commissioner, but I have a feeling that he's going to be kissing everyone's feet after all of this. So what do you say to that, Sandburg?"

Blair began to bounce in place and said, "That sounds fine to me. I just need to get it approved at the university. Then, I can have all of my afternoons and evenings at the station. Thank you very much, Simon," Blair said.

"That's Captain Banks," Simon stated.

"I prefer to keep things less formal," Sandburg countered smoothly. "You can call me Blair and I'll call you, Simon."

Simon shook his head, looked over at his detective, smiled and said, "Somehow, Jim, I think this will be like fighting a losing battle."

"Why do you think I call him Chief?" Jim asked, laughing.

"Blair, I really am glad you're all right. Let me know what the university says and we'll get the ball rolling," Simon said.

"Thank you again, Simon."

"Jim, why don't you let the kid ride along with you to the station so you can fill out all of your paperwork? If you're lucky, maybe Blair will help you fill them out."

"Paperwork has always been a breeze for me, Jim. I'll gladly help you," Blair said, happily.

"I'll gladly accept your help, Blair. Simon, come on, I'll give you a ride back to the station," Jim said.

"That's all right, Jim, I'm going to ride with Rafe and Brown. I just saw them drive up and I need to brief them on what happened, anyway, so I might as well kill two birds with one stone. See you there," Simon said. He picked up his cell phone and called the station to apprise Joel of what has transpired, so that he could call off the APB.

Jim and Blair walked towards the SUV and all of the other cops were stopping Blair and telling him what a good job he did, stalling the killers. Blair was actually quite proud of himself, too.

As soon as they got into the SUV, Jim said, "Seatbelt, Chief."



"You're always going to be bossing me around, aren't you?" He answered as he did the seatbelt up.

As they drove down the road, Jim said, "How would you like to have dinner with me tomorrow night? Anywhere you want to go is fine with me."

"Man, I love The Outback. How does that sound?"

"Sounds like a plan. Where will I be picking you up?" Jim asked.

"Your place. See, the problem is, I haven't got a place to live right now. My friend was only letting me stay there for a week. How about I move into your spare room for a week, Jim?"

"A week would be good. If you can't find a place in a week, then I'll give you another week. I'm in no rush, Blair."

"Sounds good to me, Jim. Let's get the paperwork done for tonight and then we can discuss what's going to be coming up with the trial and all. I'm still the witness, right?"

"You are the main witness. You're our only witness, so for the time being, I'll take very good care of you," Jim teased.

They got to the station, filled out all of the paperwork, Blair gave his statement to three officers and then it was time to go home.

Blair was dead on his feet and couldn't wait to sleep on the futon in the spare room. Well, actually he would rather spend it in Jim's bed, but he wasn't going to push anything right then. Jim seemed to want to date first. Who was Blair to complain about that?

\*

Dinner at Outback had been uneventful, both men trying not to look at each other too much, because they both were thinking, SEX. When they arrived home Blair got ready for bed first and then Jim.

Blair turned to Jim and asked, "Could I sleep with you tonight?"

"Chief, I don't want our first time to be a quickie. Let's sleep tonight and then we'll talk about it tomorrow."

"Jim, I was talking about sleeping."

"Believe me, with you in my bed, there wouldn't be much sleeping tonight," Jim warned.

"Then by all means, I want to sleep up there tonight," Blair joked.

Jim could tell that Blair was very serious, so the two of them got ready for bed and walked hand in hand up the stairway to Jim's bedroom.

The end