

SENSE OF BELONGING

Not married in the traditional sense—what the *hell* was that supposed to mean? Sara Tancredi forced herself to walk briskly along the fence, away from the conversation with Michael that had gone... *not* as is was supposed to go, that was for certain. Then again, nothing involving Michael Scofield ever did.

There were so many questions surrounding him, questions that teased and irked her with their mystery. Questions that he said had answers. Sara suspected she wouldn't like the answers any better than she did the questions.

Deep in thought, she wasn't paying attention to where she was going, but her feet knew the way well and brought her back to the infirmary without hesitation. She strode past the nurse's station, ignoring Katie who waved a file folder her way, and into her office. It took an effort to shut the door gently and refrain from slamming it behind her.

Damn him!

She planted her fists on the edge of the desk, leaning forward so her hair tickled her face, and took several deep breaths. *Pull yourself together, Tancredi*, she told her reflection that was vaguely visible in the blank monitor screen.

She dropped in her seat, sliding down until she could rest her head atop the back. What was it about Michael Scofield that he somehow managed to infiltrate her every waking thought? Her dreams too, but she wasn't about to admit *that* little fact even to herself.

At first, it had seemed all so harmless. The lighthearted banter, the innocuous flirtations, the moments of earnestness. He never hesitated to cut straight to the heart of the matter, yet made her smile when she had no reason to. Yes, Michael was in a league of his own among her patients, a bright beacon of intellect among the crude, dull prisoners that populated Fox River. It was an uncharitable thought, more befitting her father than her, and she felt ashamed. But the truth was, he *had* stood out from the instant he arrived at Fox River, from the moment he walked through her door for that first insulin shot.

Michael didn't belong, and it wasn't just her imagination. Warden Pope had noticed too. Even CO Bellick realized there was something different about Michael Scofield and had singled him out from the first day. How long since Michael had entered the prison? Three weeks? A month? Already she couldn't imagine what her life had been like before his regular visits brightened her days. Her eye fell onto the paper flower he'd brought her the morning after her birthday. Another smile wanted to play around her lips and she pursed them, keeping the smile in. She should throw the flower out, remove every

scrap of evidence that there had ever been anything beyond a doctor-patient relationship between her and Michael.

She snorted a wry laugh. Relationship, that was a big word. There wasn't one, never would be; there never *could* be. In spite of those times when they connected—here, in this office, or that one time up among the pipes in the ceiling—except for those brief moments, they were worlds apart. He, an inmate; she, the prison doctor. Still, her subconscious kept coming up with suggestions how to bridge the gap, no matter how many times she told it to stop with the nonsensical plans.

And then, on top of it all, she learned Michael had a wife.

Sara uttered a groan, then pushed herself back to her feet, firmly straightening her spine, schooling her features into the professional doctor's mask which was the only face most of her patients ever got to see. Though it had hit her like an icy shower, the reality check his marriage brought her was most welcome. Michael Scofield was *exactly* where he deserved to be: in prison, serving a five year sentence for armed robbery. She'd do well to never forget that again.

Yet, even as she walked to the door to tell Katie she was ready to see her next patient, a tiny voice continued to murmur in the back of her mind: *Michael doesn't belong here.*

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