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Rating: PG-13

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Title: An European Paperchase

Chapter one: Prologue

It was a typical day at McCarran International airport. Hundreds of people were on their way to wild and wonderful destinations, filling out the small space in the departure hall; the air buzzing with their excited chatter. It was an odd mix to say the least. There were business men in their black, grey and pin-striped suits with serious faces and definable aura's of importance. There were small groups of families, hosting stressed mothers and harassed looking fathers with a few kids dangling from each limb.

The last group consisted mainly of jaded singletons and transients; they were the quiet ones who made a beeline for the bar. That morning, Sara Sidle happened to be amongst them. To say that this was a strange turn of events would be a grossly inadequate description of the anarchy, which had taken over the lives of the night shift team these past few days.

Little did she know, it all began – as was often the case at the Crime Lab- with a corpse.

Sam Braun was well known as the estranged father of Catherine Willows. On Monday morning when he died of a heart failure on an operating table at Desert Palms Hospital, she became the sole beneficiary of all his worldly goods. By Tuesday afternoon, Catherine and in turn Lindsey found themselves a good fifty million dollars richer- minus the settling of various debts and paying out partners.

Wednesday at Sundown, Braun's ashes were scattered over the Nevada desert and he was officially deemed deceased by all who knew –and borderline loved- him. Thursday afternoon Catherine returned to work at the lab after taking a three days emergency vacation time, minus any kind of explanation to her supervisor who left several aggravated phone messages.

Being the devious, yet adorable, woman that she was, Catherine decided to keep her windfall a secret. The aim being to use her riches for the good of her fellow man, which in her world didn't include starving orphans or war refugees, there were bigger charity cases then that at stake. She would amend the lives - both personally and professionally- of her co-workers once and for all.

The changes happened so minutely at first that nobody noticed until it was much too late...

New lab equipment arrived on Friday morning; it was met with extreme puzzlement by Ecklie's team and later that night by Grissom's. Nobody was complaining as state of the art forensic tools and software didn't come cheap and it made their lives a whole lot easier, but still, who was their mystery benefactor?

Saturday night Cavallo came into the breakroom and handed out vacation slips to all and sundry, including Greg Sanders, whose mouth flapped open like Billy Bass, the musical fish

in Gil's office. They were dated from the following night to cover a variety of periods; Catherine feigned shock with the rest of them, concealing a grin with a puzzled frown.

It was decided –and argued over passionately- that management's word was final. Specialists would be flown in from labs around the country to replace them for as long as necessary. Grissom was not impressed as it appeared he was not exempted from the relaxation order. Catherine found it particularly amusing when he asked –simultaneously with a certain brunette-

“What on earth am I supposed to do with a holiday?!”

They would not have to wait long to find out. At the end of that shift, as the sun came up over the horizon and they made their weary way to the locker room. It was Nick who found his note first and the others followed in cannon, reading their identical messages, amazed grins and eye rolls were abundant.

Nick/ Warrick/ Sara/ Greg/ Grissom/ Catherine,

Got some spare time on your hands? Want to make the most of it?

Bring yourself and your passport to McCarran International Airport, today at 1pm.

Head to the departure lounge bar and ask the bar tender for a Pina Colada with a green umbrella.

Don't you love a good a puzzle?

Be there or be square.

Catherine listened patiently to their elaborate speculations, knowing better than anyone that these letters had nothing to do with government conspiracies or grateful, rich victims. As they slowly ran out of ideas she decided it was time to speak up and nudge things along.

In her most pragmatic tone of voice she encouraged, “Come on guys, where's your sense of adventure? If I can find a sitter for Lindsey, then I'm there. I don't want to spend my first real vacation in years, stuck indoors. I say let's all home and pack!”

A murmur of approval echoed around the changing room and the six of them parted in front of the building, hurrying back to their respective domains to use their time as effectively as possible. They were tired of thinking everything over so meticulously, it was time to act first, reflect later....

Back at her apartment Sara took a quick shower, dusted off her suitcase and started indiscriminately throwing various items and clothes into it in; after all she had no the idea where they'd end up. It could be the Gobi desert or Greenland! A small growl escaped her lips at the prospect of such uncertainty; it didn't seem bright to let herself be led so blindly.

Loosen up Sidle, and remember how to live.

Four hours later, Sara was in the back of a cab on her way to the airport and an hour on top of that found her solo at the infamous bar. She had yet to spot a single member of the night shift

and it was slightly disconcerting, but a strawberry blonde head watched over Sara from a safe distance away, hidden by a wide -brimmed sun hat and expensive shades.

“What can I get you, miss?” A friendly dark featured, bar tender asked.

“I’ll have a Pina Colada with a green umbrella,” Sara smiled.

“Here you go, free of charge,” he winked.

Sara blushed and took a large gulp of her tropical cocktail in an attempt to quell her numerous doubts and shaky nerves. She caught sight of a small cream coloured envelope that had been slyly slid beneath her glass, a second message awaited her.

Sara,

I’m glad you made it, please head to Gate Four. You will be met by a flight attendant who will handle all your boarding details.

I hope you allow yourself to enjoy the journey; more details will await you on arrival at your destination.

Are you still curious?

All good things come to those who wait.

Ten minutes later, Sara took her seat beside a familiar face and as the final boarding call went out it became clear that they were the only members of the team aboard this particular flight. Grissom exhaled sharply and muttered bitterly beneath his breath,

“I think we’ve been had.”

“Ladies and gentleman, please fasten your seatbelts the plane is about to take off.”