

The Love Boat

by David Carner

Chuck finds himself on a cruise that was strongly suggested to him by Awesome and Ellie. Sarah finds herself in the middle of a pear shaped mission, alone, trying to find a way to survive. Fifteen days, together, on a boat. This will be multiple 1k chapters. This will not be heavy. This will be ridiculous. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have writing it.

Rated: T · Genre: Humor, Romance · Chapters: 17

Chapter 1: The Love Boat

A/N: Been a lot of well-written HEAVY stuff lately. And look, that is needed. But, I know I always get PMs of people thanking me for my stuff as a pallet cleanser after reading said HEAVY stuff. So if you want something HEAVY...this ain't it. I'm not even gonna say it's well-written. Let's be honest, for the last six months I haven't done much, and by now most of you know why. Life is ebbs and flows, right? So, I'm gonna dust off my chops and give this one a whirl. All apologies to Marshall...Guess who's back? Back again? David's back. Tell a friend.

Disclaimer: I do not own Chuck

As she sat in the chair, across from her boss, she wondered how many times she had been there before. She knew this time...it felt different.

And it should.

Each time she had a mission, a part of her...changed.

In the past, she had always thought that was good. With each experience there should be knowledge gained. And knowledge should change you. Whether those changes were profound or subtle had to do with not only the person experiencing said changes, but also how much one let themselves feel the change. It also mattered how much one ignored or didn't ignore their feelings in general.

If she wasn't sitting in the CIA Director's office, she would have smiled. And she did smile, just not a full smile. A tight, controlled smile. But that was enough. Langston Graham saw the smile, and if he had looked....troubled....that was the word she was going with....troubled...if he had looked troubled before he looked shaken now.

Not that anyone else would have noticed it.

But that was her job.

She was the best in the CIA, not just because of her training in the CIA, but her training before....her environment before the CIA.

The things she learned from her dad before she had been old enough to walk. Were those skills genetic or taught, or both...she would never know. What she did know was she had the ability to make a read on someone on the spot and that had saved her life more times than she cared to count.

The very reason she had survived the last mission was because of those said skills.

She couldn't help but think of the last time she sat in this office.

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Then

"I need you to go to [redacted]," Graham told her as she entered the office. She had seen Graham troubled before, but for him to begin telling her the mission before she had even sat down...this was new. She sat and he handed her a folder. It was the thinnest file she had ever seen. She looked up at him, pulled out the one sheet of paper. "I know."

"Director, I need...something," Sarah insisted.

"Here's what I can tell you," Graham said, leaning forward, his hands clasped together, his brow furrowed. "We have a problem in the CIA. I thought I was being paranoid, hell, maybe I still am, and this is a wild goose chase but..." He was silent for a moment.

"Azerbaijan."

Her face tightened. "I-"

He held up his hand. "Easy, agent," Graham said. Sarah relaxed a smidge. Just one.

"There have been little consistent inconsistencies popping up in assignments the past few months."

She was silent as she processed this. "A mole," she said, not asked.

"Not just one," Graham answered. Sarah sat back in her chair. For anyone who would have glanced at the room, nothing seemed amiss, but Graham knew she was shook. "We have moles in the CIA, and this contact says they have a USB drive with all the names."

"What is my mission?" Sarah asked.

"Extraction," Graham told her. "Both the drive and the contact."

"Just me?" Sarah asked. "How many are in this network?"

Graham was silent for a moment. "We believe between twenty and thirty agents, analysts, and other staff."

"That wasn't what I asked."

Graham huffed a laugh. "That's why you're the best," he said softly. "We think our enemies are financing all of this." Sarah stiffened. "I have no idea."

"This could be suicide," Sarah replied.

"I know," Graham told her. "I don't take this assignment lightly."

"And my choice is this or...resign?"

"Agent Walker...Sarah...I can't trust anyone else." She sat with that. "If you succeed, you will have saved hundreds of lives."

"But if I don't, I'm dead...or worse, and this is completely solo."

"It is, there is no one, no one I trust," Graham told her.

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Now

She reached into her bag and pulled out two items. She put the first, the USB drive on his desk. He looked up from the after action report she had filed last night. He grasped the drive like it was toxic. "We will get our best people on it."

"It's already been decrypted," Sarah told him. His eyes went wide. "Forty-seven names."

"Sarah." "Jim Teller. Eagle Scout," Sarah said, looking him right in the eye. "My analyst in Azerbaijan."

"Damn it," Graham muttered. "Wait, who's-"

"The only other person who's seen this list is the only person I trust, and if anything happens to him...." She trailed off, and if Graham had looked rocked before....she had no

good metaphors for this. He was off balance.

She laid the paper on his desk. He looked at it, and then looked up at her. "What is this?" he asked, pointing at the paper.

"My resignation letter," Sarah told him.

"I see that, but what is...THIS?" he said pointing at the bottom.

She stretched her neck to look. She knew exactly what he was pointing at, but she felt like be a bit performative today. "My signature."

"You have excellent handwriting," a voice beside her broke the silence. She turned, and this time, she didn't bother hiding the smile. "It's not just legible, but very precise and elegant."

"Thank you," she said somewhat shyly in a slightly lower voice, but one more full of life.

For the first time since she had sat down, Langston acknowledged Chuck Bartowski was in the room by looking at him. Langston looked back over at Sarah, then back to Chuck, and then back to Sarah. "I know it's your signature," Langston said, barely keeping his composure, still pointing at it. "But...that's not your signature."

She slowly turned to look at her scrawl on the paper. "It says Sarah Bartowski."

"That's not your NAME!" he said.

Chuck leaned over. "There's a vein pulsing in his neck.

She patted his leg, never taking her eyes off of Graham. "I'm married. I'm resigning. That is my resignation letter. This is my husband. The man I trust."

Langston looked like someone had dropped a rabid squirrel in his pants and forgotten to tell him what to do about it.

A/N: I know, it's got soooooooooo much angst. What happened between then and now in [redacted]? (David, did you use [redacted] so you don't have to look things up and just worry about the fluffy nonsense? *Puts hand to chest, looks offended as possible and says* ME??????)

Yep.

Come on back next time for how they met, and how they fell in love. Again, the only heavy thing about this is the fluff.

Thank you all for all the support my entire time here, but especially the past six months.

You're the best. Love y'all

David

Chapter 2: The Love Boat Ch 2

A/N: You're back? You realize this will be fluff and shenanigans, right? You realize if you get die a betes, it's because you have ignored the warnings. It's been a while since I've done one of these and I HOPE I still got it.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

Then, [redacted]

It had been a trap. She was walking down the street, glad she had taken extra precautions. She had created a disguise. Her father rarely used them, telling her, that if you did, it was your gut telling you that you were in a no-win situation.

He had called it *The Kobayashi Maru*. She had later found out he hadn't created that name, it was from some TV show about space and stars and journeys or something. It was all a bunch of nonsense. But what she did know was how *The Kobayashi Maru* was beaten. You didn't. You had to change the game. She had looked at the meet from every angle she could and decided that if it went south, the only hope was she wasn't identified.

She knew that high tech cameras could probably work their way through the disguises but she also knew that using those devices could put the users at risk of being found out. She didn't know the ins and outs of all the tech, but she knew enough. She knew it like she knew TV. She didn't understand how the satellite worked, but she knew how to turn on the TV and get what she needed to see.

She had on a wig, padded clothing that made her look bigger than she was.. Sunglasses to hide her eyes and a prosthetic mask to change some of her features. And now, she was being corralled. She was catching enough glimpses of the men tracking her to know she was being herded. To the docks. There was one passenger boat at the dock. People were milling about and it seemed like while the boat would be leaving soon, people were going off and on. No one was checking to see who belonged. That was her shot.

She glanced toward the cafe and saw a tall man squatting, picking up a doll a little girl had dropped and offering it to her. His height was useful. His T-shirt said, *Obey, gravity, it's the law*. That wasn't particularly useful. Neither were the Chuck Taylors on his feet. The child grabbed the doll and threw her arms around the man's neck. He stood, hugged a woman, who looked to be the mother of the child, and then was grabbed in a bear hug by the man with the woman and the child. Sarah headed toward the cafe. She had to get out of this disguise and then onto that boat. That was her only shot and it wasn't much of a shot.

His shirt was ridiculous.

His shoes were worse.

He was still her best option.

She knew she couldn't feel the USB drive burning against her skin, where it hung on a necklace, but somehow she could. She had known the meet was wrong, and she didn't know what told her to take cover, but she had, as a bullet ended the life of her contact. She had hurried into the open, knowing that they wanted her captured. They could have already ended her.

If they caught her, eventually they would kill her. She had always known that dying was possible, that wasn't what scared her. What scared her was the part between catching and the dying.

She saw the man head into the cafe and toward the restrooms. She made a calculated decision in a split second that she would spend the rest of her life playing in her mind. The look in the child's eyes when the man had squatted, picked up her doll, and handed it to her. It was a simple thing.

But it wasn't.

It was someone who was tall. Someone who knew he was, and bent down to a child's height. In a day where every calculation was one to stay alive, that...simple action...told her it was her best hope.

He had stopped for a child.

Not because anyone was watching.

Not because there was anything in it for him.

He had simply seen a little girl lose something and decided that fixing the problem mattered.

He was a good man.

She knew that.

She couldn't tell you how she knew that, but she knew that.

She didn't know how he'd changed the calculus. She only knew that, somewhere in the back of her mind, a quote from *The Princess Bride* surfaced.

I mean, if we only had a wheelbarrow, that would be something.

He was her wheelbarrow.

It made absolutely no sense.

It made perfect sense.

She followed him into the cafe, her stride lengthening. She had one shot at this, as he rounded the corner to enter the restroom, she saw no one else was in the hallway, and no one could see her. He opened the door, entered and she walked in right behind him.

She saw his eyes go wide. It would have been comical if her life wasn't in danger.

"I need your help," she blurted out. "There are men following me."

He glanced toward the door, suddenly looking alarmed.

"Oh."

A pause.

"That's probably bad, right?"

Sarah stared at him.

He was her wheelbarrow.

}o{

Now

"You know the biggest regret of us getting married?" Chuck asked. Sarah turned to him, a knowing smile on her face. Langston did too. There was hope there. "And maybe regret is the wrong word, because I have no regrets. Maybe it's more of a--"

She laid her hand on his leg and simply said, "Chuck."

He stopped rambling and cleared his throat. "Right. As I was saying, I love the swoop you used when you wrote the 'l' in Walker." Langston stared at Chuck like he was a being from another planet.

"I want to be a Bartowski," she said simply.

"And I want you to be whatever you want, it's just...I liked that 'l'," Chuck said with a shrug.

"Well, my middle name is Lisa," Sarah told him. Langston's eyes bugged out of his head. She knew that would set him off. Her giving Chuck her real middle name. "I could be Sarah L Bartowski."

"And while I appreciate you trying to do that for me," Chuck told her. "A capital 'L' and a lowercase 'l' just look different in cursive."

"They do," Sarah agreed.

"I guess anytime I write anything to you with my name on it, I'll just have to write love you in lower case letters after it so you can see my 'l'," Sarah told him. Chuck looked so happy he could have melted off the chair and puddled into a bucket.

Langston looked from Chuck to Sarah. "HIM?" he asked, pointing at Chuck.

"Yes," Sarah said, her eyes flashing. "Him. The man I love."

Langston wondered if this day could get worse.

A/N: Such angst....how will we make it? See you soon.

Chapter 3: The Love Boat Ch 3

A/N: Do you know how hard I laughed typing Sarah entering the bathroom behind Chuck and shutting the door. Sure, she's in a disguise, but...you know the look on his face would have been priceless. Disclaimer: I do not own Chuck *Then [redacted]* She watched his face. Outside, with the little girl and the family, it had been kind. It had been full of love, and laughter. As she entered the bathroom, and he realized that she had followed him, it went to wide-eyed shock. And now, as she told him her predicament, the kind face was gone, and it was one of disappointment and anger. "Why are men like that?" he muttered. "I can go get my brother-in-law and we can," he began. She laid her hand on his bicep. His words...the look on his face...he didn't know her and he was trying to help. "It's not like that," she said. She reached up and pulled off the wig. "I'm an American spy, and those men are trying to find me." "What happens if they find you?" he asked. She began to pull off the prosthetic. "Eventually they will kill me," she told him. She threw all of it into the coat. She was going to wrap everything up into the coat, and bury it in the garbage can. She knew they'd probably eventually find it but hopefully she'd be far enough away by the time they figured it out that it wouldn't matter. It was the best of bad choices. "And during the eventually," he asked. She was looking in the mirror as he asked that question. She was making sure everything was off her face. She turned and saw the look on his face. "Okay," he said, seeing her face. "What do you need?" "I need that stall to change clothes, unless you do," she told him. He looked confused. "You came in here to..." "Oh, I'm good," he said, shaking his head. She got a questioning look on her face. "Shy bladder," he said with a shrug. She found that absolutely adorable and was berating herself. She was in the middle of a mission. She did not have time for this. "I need you not to leave. Please." "I won't," he said, assuring her. His words didn't matter to her. It was his face. In an instant, she knew he would not. She nodded and stepped into the stall, closed the door, and began peeling off the oversize clothes, thankful for the outfit she had on underneath it. "Why?" she asked, shrugging the clothes off as quickly as possible. "What do you mean?" He asked. The door opened, and she stepped out. She was wearing a floral print dress and looked like

someone out enjoying their day. "Why are you helping me? For all you know I could be being chased by police." "I considered that," the man said, shrugging. She gathered everything into a ball, pulled off the trash can lid and started to put it inside. "Wait!" he said. He ran over and got some paper towels, and gently took it from her, the towels wrapped around his hands. "You don't know what's in there." She couldn't help but smile at that. "I've dealt with worse," she assured him. "I'm sure you have, but why chance it," he told her putting the clothes in the bin. He put the lid back on, and began to soap and wash his hands. "Honestly, it's a version of *The Kobayashi Maru*." She stared at him. "It's the unwinnable scenario." "Choosing to help me?" she said. "Yeah, with the facts available, I have no idea what the 'right' answer is," he said, making air quotes and then reaching for towels to dry his hands. "Here's what I know. If you are the... 'bad guy,'" he said using air quotes again. "What's the worst that happens?" "You could go to jail for being associated with me," Sarah told him. "I could," he agreed. "But, if you're telling the truth..." "I could die," Sarah finished. "Exactly," he told her. She stared at him for a moment. "Sarah Walker," she said reaching out her hand. "Chuck Bartowski," he said, and began to stick out his hand. He pulled it back. "They're still a little damp-" she reached over and grasped his hand, making him smile. She was ignoring what she was feeling, his hand in hers. She had to. She had a mission. She had to survive. But somewhere, deep inside, she heard the voice she rarely heard, saying something. Something from a movie or a book, she didn't remember which. She was young then, and still believed in a happy ending. Those days were long gone. But yet...it sprung up in her...bubbled up, like her heart had revived and was warming her cold, dead life of nothing but existence. *Love is many things none of them logical* She pushed that thought down. This wasn't fair. Why here, why now? And that thought, brought another. *Life isn't fair, it's just fairer than death, that's all* In this moment, that her life hung in the balance of a stranger, she was remembering quotes from *The Princess Bride*. Both the movie and the book. Why now? Why was the eight year old girl in her doing this now. Because that eight year old girl had prepared her entire life for this, and regardless of whatever her name was or the age. Sarah Walker...she always was prepared. }o{ Now "You can't resign," Langston told her. "I'll tell you the truth and its up to you to live with it," Sarah said softly. Langston looked confused. "It's from *The*

Princess Bride,” Chuck told Langston. “Yeste says it to Inigo Montoya.” Langston looked even more confused. “See, Yeste took in Inigo Montoya after his father, Domingo, is killed for two years until Inigo runs away.” Langston looked from Chuck to Sarah. Sarah was just watching Chuck, an unchecked smile on her face. “Yeste was a famous sword maker who frequently took on commissions that were above his skill level and he secretly had Domingo make them instead.” “What does this have to do with anything?” Langston asked. “You’ve known her longer than I,” Chuck pointed out. “I have,” Langston said, feeling like he was getting the upper hand. “And when have you ever know when she’s decided something that she goes against it?” Chuck asked. Sarah watched in real time as Langston processed exactly what had been said. A/N: Such. Angst.

Chapter 4: The Love Boat Ch 4

A/N: David, why is it called Love Boat if they're not on the boat yet?

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck.

Then, [redacted]

"Okay, Sarah Walker, do you have a plan?" Chuck asked. "Do you need to call someone? Like Q? Wait, are you disavowed?"

"Who is Q?" Sarah asked. "Is that the guy off of space journey?"

Chuck stared at her. He started to open his mouth, and closed it. "I...I don't think. I always assumed Q was for quartermaster in Bond, but then there's the Star Trek Q, which isn't the same Q, obviously, because that's a completely different Q, although technically they're both Qs, but Q was named Q because Gene named it after a friend."

"Who's Gene?"

"Gene Roddenberry, created Star Trek," Chuck said. Sarah just looked at him. "What you called... 'space journey'," he reminded her.

Sarah studied him for a moment.

He could apparently turn a simple question into a discussion about three different television shows.

She should have found that annoying.

She didn't.

"Okay, so back to the original question," Sarah said, trying to steer their conversation.

"There was an original question?" he asked, his mind still reeling from Q, Star Trek, James Bond, a real life CIA agent, and possibly the most beautiful woman he had ever met in his life following him into a bathroom.

Sarah watched him for another second.

He was nervous. He was overwhelmed. He was talking far too much.

And somehow, she already knew that if she needed him to keep talking, he would.

That could be useful.

"Chuck, focus," she told him. He nodded. She told him everything that was going on, obviously leaving out actual names and places that were redacted.

"We could really use either Q," he muttered.

She pulled back her chin. "I tell you all that, and you're still focused on the letter guy?"

"What, no," Chuck answered shaking his head. "I mean, I have a plan. It is a TERRIBLE plan-"

Sarah raised a perfect eyebrow.

"You said you have a plan."

"I do."

"You also said it's terrible."

"Those things aren't mutually exclusive."

"Chuck, I have people chasing me, right now I will take any plan, especially from someone not in this line of work because the guys chasing me think the same way I do," Sarah told him.

"Okay," Chuck said, unconvinced. "So, the way I see it, we need to get you to safety."

"Yes," Sarah said.

"I have a cabin on that boat," Chuck said. "It's a room for two." Sarah was silent. "Okay, full transparency, Ellie and Awesome...Ellie is my sister, and Awesome is her husband-"

"Awesome is what someone named their kid?" Sarah asked.

"Oh, no, I call him Awesome, because, well, everything he does is Awesome,"

Sarah stared at him.

"So everyone calls him Awesome?"

"No. Just me."

"Why?"

"Because he's awesome."

Chuck explained. "In fact, I can't prove it, but the song from the Lego Movie, *Everything is Awesome* is pretty much based on him and I think someone that knew him wrote it, and-

"Chuck," she said, cutting him off. She was furious with herself for doing it because she found the whole thing adorable, and she was even more annoyed at herself for just how adorable she found it.

"Right," he said, nodding. She wanted to grin at his sudden about-face. "So, the cruise is for...those in love and looking for love." Her face went still. "OHMYGODNOTASWINGERSCRUISENOTASWINGERSCRUISE!"

This. Was. Absurd. And there was no way she could stop herself from laughing. She didn't mean to. She was a trained CIA agent. She had been tortured, shot at, interrogated, and nearly killed. She should have the ability to stop herself from laughing. She did not. And the more she watched his face go from outright shock over what he thought he was suggesting to watching her laugh and the softening of his face. Apparently, Chuck Bartowski screaming about a swingers' cruise was where her professional discipline ended.

She also noticed something while she was laughing. He wasn't embarrassed anymore. He was smiling because she was laughing. Sarah had known men who enjoyed being the reason a woman laughed. Chuck seemed to enjoy the fact that she was happy.

The line came to her head. The one she had always carried, even when she pushed the voice of the eight-year-old away. Because this one...this one had stuck with her. This man, the look on his face was from him watching her laugh at him. The men she knew were offended when she would laugh at them or their actions and this one...this one seemed to have nothing but joy over it.

The line ASSAULTED her

“Enough about my beauty.” Buttercup said. “Everybody always talks about how beautiful I am. I’ve got a mind, Westley. Talk about that.”

“That was a pretty special crash out, wasn’t it?” Chuck asked. She nodded, unable to speak, her lips covering her teeth, trying to control her laughter. “Well, then let me give you the best part. My sister booked me a single room on this trip so I might meet someone. Awesome...went behind her and upgraded it to a double so that...if I get lucky...” Chuck trailed off.

“Nothing wrong with that,” Sarah said.

“It is when...well, let’s just say love has been avoiding me like the plague.”

She was one part sad for him, one part happy, and all parts confused. She understood the sad part. She didn't understand the happy part. Why did she care? Why should she care? For her to care...well that would be...

The realization arrived fully formed.

There was only one appropriate response.

Inconceivable

“So, my terrible plan is to get you onto that boat, into my cabin, and then you can disembark and we can get you home,” Chuck told her. “Okay, two problems,” Sarah said. “This is doable, but one, how long is the trip?”

“Fifteen days,” Chuck said, his head down.

“Ooookay,” Sarah said. “Two, I don’t have a ticket.”

“That’s fixable, I just might need your help,” Chuck told her. “If I can get access to their systems...but, can’t you just tell the captain that it’s a CIA emergency?”

She looked at him. No training. No weapons. No backup. No reason whatsoever for him to help her. And he was still trying. “Chuck, you’re the only person that I can trust,” she told him.

Looking back later, she would admit to herself that in this moment, she was done. Finished. Fini. Acabada. Finito. Skonczony. She watched a man...a tall adult nerd...a good man...process her words and then his face turned serious. She saw him thinking and she prayed he didn't see her swallow. Something...something in her that she was sure didn't exist...at least...not in a normal way...not in the way the eight year old that still lived inside that wanted that house.

That home.

With a red door, and a white picket fence.

She. Was. Screaming.

"Westley: This is true love — you think this happens every day?"

"Okay," he said. She was stunned by the calmness that possessed him in this moment.

"We are going to have to walk out of here like boyfriend and girlfriend and I am sorry for anything that is going to do to your reputation."

"Chuck, we've been in this bathroom together for fifteen minutes," Sarah pointed out.

"And if anything, you should be lifting my reputation."

He blinked, like he was processing and what he was coming up with was impossible.

"I don't think I understand," Chuck muttered.

"You are helping me in a desperate moment, asking nothing from me in return," she told him. "If people think I'm with you...well, I have a lot of work to do to prove I'm worthy of you."

She meant that, she really meant that. She had no idea how much at the time she did.

Now

She smiled, looked over at Chuck and took his hand, her wedding ring flashing on her left hand as she took his hand. She glanced at it. She still had work to do, but he had shown her, she didn't have to prove herself to anyone.

A/N: I KNOW. They're STILL not on the boat. The ANGSTTTTTTTTTT!

Chapter 5: The Love Boat Ch 5

A/N: Them: David, you cannot fall in love that fast. Me: Tell Sarah that...Go on. Dare you. Double. Dog. Dare you.Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

Then, still [redacted]

"So, we're going to walk out of here like a couple in love, board that boat, and then we're going to create me a ticket," Sarah said.

"Adjust mine," Chuck told her. "I basically have two, hence the double room." He hung his head. "Kinda pathetic, I know."

"No," Sarah said softly, gently lifting his chin with her cupped forefinger, looking him in the eyes. "Today, you're my hero. And Chuck, you're dating me for the next fifteen days, I'm going to need you to step up your game."

Sarah smiled. She had killed men who had tried to impress her. Chuck Bartowski had earned the title by helping a woman he'd known for fifteen minutes. She was beginning to suspect she had very weird standards.

A smile spread across his face, and then terror replaced it. "Oh, God," he said in a low voice. "How are we...you have no..."

"I have money and can get clothes," Sarah told him. "But you're worried about the PDA, aren't you?" He nodded. "Well, I don't want to make you uncomfortable-"

Chuck nodded.

Sarah considered that. He was worried about pretending to be affectionate with her. She was beginning to suspect that was going to be a problem for a completely different reason.

"Me? What about you?"

She stared at him. "I'd be dead...or worse," she reminded him, making him wince. "Without you."

“Okay,” he said, nodding. “So, what do I do?”

“Sure you don’t need to use the bathroom?” she asked. He giggled and shook his head. “Then,” she said, taking his arm and slipping it around her shoulders. “You are about to leave a bathroom with your girlfriend, so if you should blush, just know it will sell the cover even better.” Chuck turned crimson.

Sarah smiled.

This was going to be easier than she expected.

Probably because Chuck was making it very difficult for her to remember this was supposed to be an act.

}o{

She was ashamed of herself for multiple reasons. The first, she had doubted Chuck could pull it off. She was so wrong.

They walked out of the bathroom, her pulling his hand, him following, and headed out of the cafe. The manager shook his head. Apparently that wasn’t the first time he had seen something like that. But as they exited the cafe, she wrapped his arm around her shoulders and held that hand. As they walked toward the gangplank, he leaned over and planted a soft kiss on her head as they strolled up the walkway. She saw someone her spy sense told her was looking for her. The person saw her and moved past.

It was supposed to be part of the cover. Sarah knew that. Her heart, and apparently some other part of her that she wasn't going to examine too closely, hadn't gotten the memo.

They were looking for someone else. A single woman. And that’s when the thought entered her head.

She looked up at him as they walked up the gangplank, Chuck telling her all about Clara, the little girl she had seen earlier, and how much he couldn’t wait for them to meet. He was doing such a good job. Keeping the stories real. Anyone listening was thinking that he was telling his girlfriend about his family and how much he wanted

them to meet.

What she didn't know was that Chuck wanted to introduce Clara to the coolest woman he had ever met in his life.

They made their way to his cabin, and after Chuck used the bathroom...

He took longer than she expected.

She decided it was probably a shy bladder.

She had no idea why she was thinking about Chuck Bartowski's bladder.

He came back out, and opened his laptop.

"The problem is, I need a direct connection to the system to add you in." Chuck told her.

"Where?" She asked. He started to answer. "What if we did show, not tell?"

Chuck grinned. "See? This is why I like you."

Sarah stopped.

"You like me?"

"As a fake girlfriend."

He paused.

"Mostly."

Sarah looked at him.

"Mostly?"

"I should probably stop talking." The two walked outside, his laptop in her bag.

"Oh," Sarah said. They were on the bridge, but outside, looking into the windows. There, the captain was giving tours. "See that black port?" Chuck told her. She nodded. "If we could get this," he said, holding up a small drive, quite like the one that was around her neck. "Plugged in there, I can fix this."

"How long do you need?" Sarah asked. "I'm not sure five minutes max, but maybe two," Chuck told her.

She looked at him, and grinned. "You stay here, and when it's done, give me a sign, but subtle."

"Like what?" Chuck asked.

"Something a boyfriend would do with a girlfriend who is staying with him for fifteen days," Sarah said. Chuck began to think. "That's not exactly subtle," Chuck muttered.

"What?"

"Finger pistols," he said, furrowing his brow. She couldn't help herself, she could see him doing it, and something in her was warm. Very warm. It felt delicious and she again, felt herself swallow. "So, you're staying with me."

"Mmmhmm," she replied, not trusting herself to speak actual words.

"What about...." He looked around. "Oh, God, please don't hate me." He did something with his eyebrows. The warmth grew, and so did the earlier thought as they were walking up the gangplank. "That was the Bartowski eyebrow dance. Not exactly sub-"

"It's perfect," she got out. Just barely. She took the USB from his hand. "I'll wink at you when it's in."

"That's what she said," he muttered to himself and his eyes went wide. She clamped down on her lips to keep from bursting out laughing. She spun and headed inside. One wink, three minutes, forty-seven seconds, and an eyebrow dance later, she made her way back to him. "You're legal," he said, spinning the laptop towards her so she could see what he had done.

"Thank you," she said sincerely.

"So, what did you talk about to keep his interest...if I may ask?"

"Oh, a little of this, a little of that," Sarah said, watching his face. "Told him I forgot my luggage, so he thinks you have a bit of a ditz for a girlfriend."

"You're the furthest thing from a ditz," Chuck told her. He stopped, and realized he may have been a bit too forceful with that. "You're not," he muttered.

"Thank you," she said. "I also asked him about us getting married."

"You did what now?" Chuck asked.

}o{

Now

"Okay, I get it," Langston said. "You're mad about having to go in with no backup and you had no choice. They were looking for a single woman, and you got married to throw them off the trail. It's perfect spycraft."

Chuck gazed at Sarah and muttered, "I mean, you are perfect,"

"I am not," Sarah told Chuck. She then smiled. "But thank you." She turned back to Graham.

"But we can simply get the marriage annulled," Graham continued.

"No, we can't," Chuck said softly, looking a bit uncomfortable.

"Yes, we can," Graham said, like Chuck was an idiot. "If the marriage was never consummated-"

"So we can't," Sarah said. Graham closed his eyes. "Okay, while you didn't have to do what you did, your country appreciates your dedication-"

"Didn't have anything to do with the CIA," Sarah said plainly. "I wanted to. Still do."

Graham looked sick. "But there was fraud...deceit," Graham argued.

"I knew exactly what I was getting into," Chuck said.

"That's what she said," Sarah said softly, making Chuck laugh.

Graham looked sick.

A/N: THE ANNNNGGGGGSSSSSSSTTTTTTTT

Chapter 6: The Love Boat Ch 6

A/N: Do we feel sorry for Graham? No. Good.

Also, big thanks to KaulfrStonemason for betaing. The suggestions he made...*chef's kiss*. BTW, if you were hoping this calmed down....well, sir, this is a Wendy's....

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

He didn't say anything. His mind was trying to reboot.

"I also asked him about us getting married."

"I'm sorry," she said softly. He looked over at her.

"I just...I forget sometimes about..." she trailed off. He surprised her when he gently took her hand and led her over to a restaurant on the deck. They sat down at one of the tables overlooking the ocean.

"Talk to me," he told her, his mind suddenly working just fine.

"I forget people haven't lived how I've lived and that...." She trailed off, frustrated.

"So, when someone talks about Q, you don't get confused about Star Trek or Bond," he gently teased. She looked up at him and gave a small smile and said, "I'm starting to understand that you have a reference for almost everything."

"Sarah, we all have the lives we live, and we're used to them. But at the end of the day, we're all the same people. We all have things we are scared of, things we wished we could do better. I'm never going to judge you for what you have to do on this job. I was just a little stunned that someone like you would ask about marrying someone like me. And I don't mean real you, marrying real me."

"What do you mean," Sarah asked, curious.

"Without going too deep into my past, because as Ellie says I ramble and run people off," Chuck began. Sarah fought back the smile of the irony of Chuck nearly spiraling right there. "I find it hard to believe anyone would ever want to be with me, given how

past relationships have gone, especially someone like you.”

“Someone like me?” Sarah asked. “Why, because I’m attractive?”

“No,” Chuck said. “Wait, you are attractive, but...gah. You are attractive, but...and don’t get me wrong, very attractive, but it’s not just your looks that make you attractive.” She tilted her head.

“You’re so kind.” For some reason, that one landed harder than all the others. Attractive, beautiful, dangerous—she had heard those words before. Kind was an entirely different thing, one she wasn’t prepared for.

It took every second of every bit of training she'd ever had not to react to that. She had been called many things in her life, but kind....

“Here you are, literally running for your life.” he paused and grinned. “If you are who you say you are and Sarah Walker is your real name.”

She didn’t smile, in fact, she looked a little sad. Chuck realized he had messed up, started to open his mouth when she spoke. “My legal name is Sarah Walker. I’ve had many names over the years. I don’t even remember them all.” He sat there quietly. She looked up at him. “But I consider it my name now.”

Chuck nodded. “Okay. Sarah Walker it is.”

No questions. No curiosity about the other names. Just acceptance.

“Right,” Chuck said nodding. “Was going for a joke about you being the bad guy...girl...you know what, that sounds bad, and I’m just making it worse.”

“Sounds like you want me to be a bad girl,” Sarah said, showing no emotion. His eyes went wide, and she couldn’t help but grin. She hadn’t expected that to be funny. More importantly, she hadn’t expected to enjoy watching him react to it.

“See, that right there, you’re funny,” he told her.

The smile that appeared on her face was smaller than the one she felt inside.

"I'm not," Sarah said, shaking her head. "I have been told, at length, that I am not funny."

The answer came too quickly for him to know how much the question meant to her. "What idiot told you that?"

"My ex-boyfriend," Sarah said. "He said I'm not funny and I don't do feelings."

"My ex-roommate in college said I had too many feelings," Chuck said, shaking his head.

"Bryce always said I guarded everything," Sarah told him. He looked at her. "My ex-boyfriend."

"Funny, my ex-roommate, Bryce, said I let everyone in," Chuck told her.

She stared at him.

"Bryce?"

Chuck stopped. "Yeah."

Sarah's expression changed.

"Your Bryce?" he asked.

"My Bryce."

She was silent for a moment. "Chuck, I'm going to ask this, because it cannot be any worse than me just telling you that I asked the captain about us getting married," she began.

"I don't know," Chuck said. "If his name is Bryce Larkin..." he trailed off, seeing the look on her face. "It can't be....little shorter than me, good-looking... really good-looking... some might say pretty?"

"Thought he knew what was best for everyone?" Sarah asked. Chuck just sat back in his chair, his mind blown. Sarah blew out a breath.

}o{

They were lying on the bed, side by side, both staring at the ceiling. "Got you kicked out of college," Sarah said, shaking her head.

"Cheated on you," Chuck said, shaking his head. They had spent the last half hour explaining their relationship with Bryce to each other.

"What a small world," she said, still in disbelief.

Chuck looked at her. "I don't think that's how small worlds are supposed to work; I think Bryce is more like a plot twist with good hair."

She couldn't help but snort a laugh at that.

"Well, now I have to know something," Chuck said. She turned on her side towards him. He turned on his, and they laid there just looking at each other. "Why did you mention us getting married?"

"It's silly," Sarah said.

"Hey, I'm not him," Chuck told her.

"No," she said softly, shaking her head and smiling. "You're not."

"Listen, if you don't want to-

"They are looking for a single, lonely spy on the run," Sarah said softly. "And if they search this boat, and they will, all they will find are all the passengers and one happily married Sarah Bartowski, who is enjoying her time with her new husband."

"Okay, wait, how can they be on the boat?" Chuck asked.

"Chuck, maybe not all of them, but some of them have to be," Sarah told him. "They run [redacted] and if they tell the captain they are getting on the boat and searching it, then they are."

Chuck sat there a moment, thinking. "What are you thinking?"

"How mad Ellie is going to be that I got married and she didn't get to come," Chuck told her.

Sarah blinked. Of everything she had told him, apparently *Ellie missing the wedding* was the emergency Chuck's brain had chosen to focus on.

"Chuck," Sarah began.

"Sarah, either you and Bryce are running the most elaborate trick on me in the book, and I don't think that for a second, or everything you've told me is the absolute truth," Chuck told her.

"No, you might get hurt," Sarah said. "That's unacceptable."

"If you don't, you will get hurt, and that's unacceptable," Chuck told her.

"Chuck you don't know me," Sarah insisted.

"Wrong. I know you; I just haven't known you long, and you haven't known me long," Chuck told her. "You are my friend now, and that comes with the Chuck Bartowski friendship experience." Sarah smiled. She suspected there was no brochure, no instruction manual, and absolutely no return policy, and apparently she did not care about it.

"Well, that sounds fun," Sarah said, grinning.

"Eh, it's not for everyone," Chuck said. "Let me marry you to protect you."

"Then you should know that if I'm taking your last name, I'll have to protect you," Sarah told him.

"Okay," he said nodding. A quote came to her, and she let it.

"Her heart was a secret garden and the walls were very high."

}o{

She looked over at Chuck while Graham was trying to calm his nausea.

"Good thing you're really tall and good at climbing walls," Sarah said softly.

"I'm really not," Chuck told her.

"Shh," she said, smiling and patting his hand.

A/N: Ah, trauma bonding over the ex. The ANnnnNNNGGGgggSSSStttTTT

Chapter 7: The Love Boat Ch 7

A/N: I think I have a chicken and egg situation. Like in Lights Camera Action, they are married at the beginning of the fic, but I then showed you how they got there, so, are they married in Ch 1 or Ch 7. Hmmm? What's that? Do the typity typity? FINE

Note: Guys, I cannot recommend Charah's work enough, but The Crown's Gamble...I AM. SWOOOOOOONING. Do yourself a favor and check it out if you haven't.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

Then, still [redacted]

Sarah could feel the nerves radiating off of him. She didn't know why she found it both adorable and so enjoyable that this man...this nerd...this tall nerd that was so sweet and adorable...was so nervous about a fake wedding. She reached over to take his hand.

"They're really sweaty," she found herself saying, looking up at him. She squeezed the hand...if it really was a hand and not a water-making device. She smiled. She couldn't remember the last time someone being nervous around her had made her feel this good; actually, this was the first time that something like that had happened in her life.

"My hands sweat when I get nervous," Chuck admitted. "I knew I'd be nervous on my wedding day but..." he trailed off, giving her a knowing look.

"But this is good," Sarah told him, smiling. "It means you're taking this seriously."

"Oh, I am, because if it's unbelievable..." he gave her a look. It said so many things. It acknowledged that if he messed this up she could die...or worse. It said he didn't want to let her down. It said...it said something else...a bit of regret, like...like he wished it was real. And she was sure, given what little he had told her of his love life, he did wish it was real. The thought should have frightened her. Instead, something warm and fuzzy moved through her chest.

Chuck Bartowski seemed like the man who wanted the real-life wedding, the fairy tale love story. Like *The Princess Bride*.

Love is many things, none of them logical.

She thought of Buttercup's long profession of love to Wesley, and in that moment, she made two decisions. The first, the one of the agent, was that she was going to show Chuck Bartowski what it was like to be married to someone who loved him. The agent decided this, knowing it was what would keep her safe and that she could trust this man.

The second decision was what startled her.

Somewhere, deep inside her, the lanky eight-year-old with pigtails, braces, and a tattered copy of *The Princess Bride* overruled her. She had spent years teaching herself not to want things she couldn't have. Apparently, eight-year-old Sarah had never received that particular training. She told Sarah Walker she definitely had it wrong.

She was going to let Chuck Bartowski show her what it was like to be loved.

The thought terrified her.

The eight-year-old Sarah, naturally, thought this was the best idea anyone had ever had.

The agent, the trained con woman, every defense ever built said in unison that she could not. She wouldn't survive it. She wouldn't make it out.

Her agent brain objected immediately.

"We'll never survive!"

"Nonsense. You're only saying that because no one ever has."

The agent made one final plea.

I won't be the same.

And the eight-year old, the one wise beyond her years who hadn't been hurt, trained, and told how to shut off her feelings, she destroyed them.

I'm not supposed to be.

And then, because Sarah had forgotten how much of a planner even eight-year old her was, got her world rocked.

"Cynics are simply thwarted romantics."

Sarah Walker had absolutely no idea how her childhood copy of *The Princess Bride* had become a hostile witness against her.

She found herself staring at his lips, and the line came to her. Not the one from the movie, which was good, but the one from the book, which was better.

"There have been five great kisses since 1642 B.C...(before then couples hooked thumbs.) And the precise rating of kisses is a terribly difficult thing, often leading to great controversy.... Well, this one left them all behind."

In her heart. Deep in Sarah Walker's heart. She knew when she kissed this man...not a performance in front of a ship's captain...not a performance in front of others to sell a cover...but when she kissed him...and in that moment...there was nothing more certain in her life than that she was going to kiss him...that line was true.

Sarah Walker was going to have the greatest kiss in all of history, and no one was stopping her...well, Chuck could, but she was just about positive that not only would he not stop her, but he also wanted to kiss her. Her eight-year-old self was already preparing the acceptance speech.

"I need to tell you something, just so you're prepared," Sarah said. Chuck looked at her. "When the captain says you can kiss me, I need you to do so, because if I kiss you...after everything you've done for me...the sacrifice you're making...the danger you're putting yourself in...the awkwardness that you're going to sit in because, like you said, I know you, just not long." She watched him grin at that. "If I kiss you like that because of how thankful I am to you...I may lose control and kiss you every remaining second of this trip, and then I will be extremely cranky because not sleeping for fifteen days would be very hard on me, and I have no idea how I kiss while that cranky."

Chuck stared at her like someone had handed him a computer attached to a bomb inside a hotel full of people and told him it was probably fine.

She watched a series of emotions play across his face, and she found deep inside of her that she wanted to watch the emotions come to his face and him have no ability to

control them for the rest of her life.

“Sarah,” he said, gaining control of his faculties surprisingly quickly. “The only reason I’m awkward is I don’t want to mess up and put you in danger. There is no sacrifice. I’m helping a friend. You don’t owe me anything.”

“I already said I wanted to kiss your face off, and now you do this? How the hell are you single, Chuck?” She genuinely wanted to know. The fact that he was blushing so hard made the question even more confusing. She watched the smile on his face. “Now, let’s go get married.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said. “One question, if this were real....” She turned to him one eyebrow raised. “Would you expect me to change my last name? Because I would.”

“Never change, Chuck,” she blurted out before she could stop herself, and honestly, she didn’t want to stop herself.

For once, Sarah Walker wasn't asking someone to become someone else for the sake of a mission, a con, or both.

“It’s who I am,” he said with a shrug, offering her his arm. The two walked arm in arm to the door of the cabin, and then realized that there was no way the two of them would fit through the door. Chuck stepped back, and gestured ladies first. Sarah Walker stepped out the door, never to return.

}o{

Now

“He chose me, Langston,” Sarah said softly. Langston watched her, and she watched the realization settle in that she was done. “And I chose him.” She threaded her fingers through his, never looking at him.

“And I’d do it all again in a minute,” Chuck added.

“Him,” Langston said in a totally different tone from earlier. One of....almost understanding. “Him,” Sarah said softly, smiling and nodding. She lifted their locked hands and kissed the back of his hand. “Always. Him.”

A/N: I know, I need everyone to hold it together. We'll get through this together. I think they'll make it. We'll find out together. *insert eyeroll here*

And, if you'd like to leave a review I do enjoy them. Take care fam.

Chapter 8: The Love Boat Ch 8

A/N: Thank you all for braving this fic with me. I know it's been hard. Seriously, do you need to get your sugar checked? Your A1C? If you want something serious and realistic, this ain't it.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

Then [redacted]

"I now pronounce you man and wife," the captain said. "You may kiss your bride." Chuck turned to her, a smile on his face. She knew it was real. She knew in his head he was thinking about how he wished this could be real. Not necessarily with her, also not necessarily with anyone else either. When he kissed her, it began gently. Now, it wasn't the one of the top five kisses in the history of the world, but it was the greatest kiss Sarah Walker had ever received.

She had been kissed by men who wanted her. She had been kissed by men that said they loved her.

This kiss...it said all of that and was also the most gentle thing she had ever felt in her life. Eight-year-old her was OUT OF HER MIND! Adult Sarah wasn't far behind.

"Anything there is that I can do for you, I will do for you; anything there is that I cannot do, I will learn to do."

As she pulled away from their kiss, she knew that quote was going to be true.

They walked out, onto the boat, hand in hand, the sun shining down, and that's when Chuck turned to her.

"I feel I have a duty to fulfill as your husband," he said softly.

She turned to him, a smile on her face that she knew was too much. She KNEW was suggestive, and she didn't even try to stop it. She didn't even pretend it was for the cover. "I think I like married Chuck."

"Well, he likes you," he blurted out before he realized what she was implying. His eyes went wide, and the shade of red he turned was a debate Sarah would have internally for years to come.

"Not...THAT!" he said in a low, but intense, whisper. She bounced a shoulder, and the color intensified. Sarah bit the inside of her cheek to keep from laughing. She was beginning to suspect that making Chuck Bartowski blush might become a hobby one she wanted to do for the rest of her life.

He cleared his throat. "I need to buy you some clothes," he told her. She gave him a look. "This isn't me being all macho man-y."

"Macho...man-y?" she asked, a grin on her face. "Is that a technical term?"

"Very."

"Yeah, you know, 'you my woman.'" Sarah couldn't help but laugh. "But there are some people looking for a single woman, probably without clothes." Sarah nodded, beginning to understand. "If you go clothes shopping, it could look suspicious."

"But if newly married Mrs. Bartowski, the ditz, went shopping, looking for clothes that made her husband happy-"

"Wait, what?" Chuck asked.

"Well, let's be honest, I gotta make my man happy," she told him, running her fingers from his earlobe down his neck. She watched him swallow, panic, break out into a sweat, and his brain melt all in less than a tenth of a second.

Sarah filed that reaction away for future use. The Chuck Bartowski file inside her brain was getting bigger and bigger, and she didn't care.

His hand caught her wrist, and he looked into her eyes. She saw what was in those eyes. "There's one part of this that is non-negotiable." His voice...was breaking...and it was doing things to her that were shocking the eight-year-old in her. This was probably age-inappropriate for the eight-year-old, but she tended not to listen to anyone, especially when she found something interesting.

"I'm listening," she replied, her eyes locked with his, his hand still, firmly, but gently around her wrist. He let go, never breaking eye contact.

"You could have probably flipped me around, pinned my arm to my back and taken out my spleen," he said still holding her wrist. He let it go.

"I would never do that to you," she said in the same voice. Low but full of....something she wasn't ready to name. She knew what it was. He KNEW what it was, but, they weren't going to name it...yet. "But, let's be honest, you'd have enjoyed it."

"I know," he answered.

That answer surprised her. He was learning. A smile played on her lips.

"The part that's non-negotiable." She nodded for him to continue. "I pay." She started to open her mouth. "If you pay, it will send up red flags. I pay, I'm a husband...a very... *happy* husband-"

"How do they know you're happy?" Sarah asked teasingly.

"Sarah...anyone looking at me can tell I am so far in over my head and loving every minute of it," he said honestly.

God she loved him.

She would have rolled her eyes, but in that moment, Chuck would have thought she was rolling her eyes at him. That wasn't true.

It was her.

More specifically eight year-old her.

She was screaming yes at the top of her lungs.

She was doing the Backpack Kid dance...badly.

She was stomping her feet, throwing her fists in the air.

She was on her back, both kicking her feet and punching air.

Fine. She loved him. There. Was that so hard?

"I love Westley. I always have. I know now, I always will."

"I agree to those terms but you have to watch me try on everything so I can see what my husband prefers," she told him.

"Sarah," he said, his voice steadier than she thought it would be. A part of her said she should turn up the heat. Hell, all of her agreed with that part.

"When I try on socks, should it be just the socks I'm trying on, or should I be fully clothed?"

"Sarah," he said, his voice breaking.

"I mean, you should see how they make my calves look," she continued.

"Sarah." It. Was. Breaking.

She leaned in. "Is my husband a....stockings guy?"

"If jump overboard right now, the entire ocean will disappear in evaporation from me trying to cool myself off," Chuck blurted out. "Oh my God, I just said that out loud. You have broken my brain."

"Understand, Chuck Bartowski," she said in a low voice, somehow getting closer, but an acceptable distance in public. "That when you tell me, non-negotiable, I feel backed into a corner and I will fight my way out. With actions come consequences."

"Noted," Chuck said. "I amend my earlier non-negotiable, and ask, humbly ask, that you take this credit card," he said pulling it out of his pocket, and holding it between them. She could see it. Black. Her eyes went wide. "And you buy clothes to protect yourself. We can talk about the card color later." He paused. "Not in public."

She nodded. "I accept your terms," she said, gently taking the card out of his grasp. "And I humbly...ask, not beg...not yet." She watched him swallow. "That you join me as I try on clothes...not socks...not yet."

Chuck closed his eyes for half a second, as though mentally adding "socks" to the list of things he was never going to survive.

“Is it for the cover?” he blurted out quietly. He shut his eyes. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t...I...I’m sorry, Sarah. I-”

“No,” she replied. “It’s not.” He opened his eyes and saw her smiling at him.

“You’re enjoying this.”

“Like you’re not.” She couldn't argue with that.

“Never said I wasn’t,” he told her. She smiled, took his hand and led him to the shop.

}o{

Now

Graham had turned away from his desk and was working on a file. Chuck leaned over to Sarah. “I have some things I need to talk to you about later. Some...non-negotiable things.”

He leaned back, a smile on his face. Sarah leaned over to him. “And I’m not wearing socks,” she said. She leaned back over as she watched his brain melt and trickle out of his ear.

“I’m so glad I went on that cruise,” he muttered. Sarah couldn’t help but laugh out loud.

A/N: You’re never looking at socks the same way, are you?

Chapter 9: The Love Boat Ch 9

A/N: *Note the author is not responsible for your die a betes*

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

Then [redacted]

They walked into the store and Chuck gently took her wrist in his hand. "I get you're having some fun, and I'm not against it, but also, please find something you like and are also comfortable. I have a sister, I know how some of these....clothes, aren't built with comfort in mind."

She gave him a half-smile that she had found herself giving quite a bit since she met this man. "See, that's the problem I'm having with tonight," she said turning to him, lacing her fingers through his. His eyes widened and she felt the half-smile grow more into a smirk. "I would think I wouldn't wear much of anything."

He barked out a nervous laugh. "Are you trying to kill your new husband?"

She was starting to think that might be a very achievable and very fun objective.

She knew he said it playfully, but then, it hit her. A black credit card. Lack of love life. What Bryce had done. "Chuck, can you do me a favor?"

"Anything," he said.

"I believe that," she said softly. "I want to continue this, but I also think maybe we need to have a conversation, and not a bad conversation," she added quickly.

"Why did you add that?" he asked. "You say you don't know me, but yet..."

"You're right, I do know you," she said with a shrug. "You'd have spiraled about that for the entire time I was in here." He nodded. "Let me do this by myself and then we go back to the cabin, relax, and have a conversation."

"Okay, as you wish," he told her. He watched her freeze. "Did...did I say something wrong?"

"No," she said. "It's just...those words..."

"It's from *The Princess Bride*," Chuck told her. He chuckled. "To be honest, I've nearly said it to you every time you ask me to do something."

Sarah looked at him for a moment. Somehow, that made the words more dangerous than they had any right to be.

"Give me ten minutes," she told him. "Go to that table," she said, pointing to it. "And I'll come get you as soon as you're done."

"Okay," he said. She started to turn, but didn't. She stood there. "Something wrong?"

"Just making sure you didn't have anything else to say," Sarah said.

He grinned. "As you wish," he said, and walked away. She stood there a second, gathered her thoughts, and then moved. She had a mission. She wasn't going to fail.

Eight-year-old Sarah was currently having another Princess Bride-related medical emergency.

}o{

She sat on the bed, and patted the spot beside her. He walked over and sat down.

"Chuck, they don't give a black card to anyone."

"No, they don't," Chuck said. "So-"

"Wait," Sarah said. "There's something I need to say. You're married to me." He nodded.

"Really, married." Sarah watched the words settle between them. The joke had been easy. The reality was complicated.

"I know," Chuck told her. "If we got divorced..." Sarah trailed off. "You could be..."

"I thought we'd get it annulled," Chuck told her.

She sat there for a moment, the half smile on her face, watching him trying to be cool. He finally glanced at the pillows on the bed and then back at her. His face....she would add that to the calculus of what all colors this man could turn.

"Uh," he managed to get out.

“Eloquent,” she said, grinning. His vocabulary would apparently return once his brain rebooted.

“Sarah,” he began.

“I don’t think either of us needs to pretend what is going on here,” she began.

“I’m not pretending,” Chuck told her.

She leaned forward. “I know.” She watched him fall apart in front of her, and she decided that she was going to enjoy putting him back together. “I’m not either.” His eyes snapped up. “But there are big boy and big girl conversations we need to have.”

“We do?” he squeaked.

“Yes,” she told him. “You were screwed over by your friend...my ex.”

“Screwed is an interesting term as he also did that to my girlfriend,” Chuck muttered.

“I see,” Sarah said. “How long have you been alone?”

“Oh, I haven’t been alone,” Chuck told her. “I have Ellie, Awesome, my best friend Morgan.”

“Uh-huh,” she said in a tone that said, “I will play this silly little game with you.”

“There’s a bird on the tree next to my apartment that I talk to,” Chuck continued. “It’s quite judgmental.”

“Birds are,” Sarah agreed.

“It has opinions about everything,” Chuck went on.

“When we get back, I’ll have to have words with it,” Sarah told him.

He blinked.

Chuck stared at her. “You’re taking this seriously?”

“You said it was judgmental.”

He was processing what she said.

She continued while Chuck's brain continued trying to catch up.

"Chuck, we could go fifteen days without consummating this marriage," Sarah continued. He made a choking sound.

"I don't want to," she said softly. "And I need you to know, what I'm feeling isn't just physical."

"It's not," he said in a voice that was cracking in more ways than were describable.

"No," Sarah said softly. "Every. Single. Time. I tell you what I'm going through, you try and make it better without taking into account how much it could hurt or damage you."

"That's not true," Chuck told her. "I've thought about it. Each time. About what it would...could cost me," he said, standing up, and pacing the room, unable to look at her. He finally lifted his head and met her gaze. "I just don't care. It's money. It's...stuff I don't care about. Since Stanford, I have protected myself, lost myself in my work and a woman...a woman I didn't know walked up to me and said she needed help. A woman in a disguise needed help and she chose me."

"It could have been random," Sarah said.

"No, not with you," he told her.

"How?" she asked. "How could you know that?"

"I have no idea, but I do," Chuck said. "I see you calculating every single move you make, except...for one instance."

"And what instance is that?" Sarah asked.

He walked up to her, held out his hand. She took it, and stood. He looked her right in the eye. "When it comes to me. You are making calculations. I see them, but it's not what is the right thing to do, what is the best thing to do." "What calculation do I make?" Sarah asked.

"How do I be with him, protect him," Chuck answered. "It's the head tilt, and the little smile you get. That's your tell."

"You think you can read me, Chuck Bartowski?" she asked with a challenging grin.

"No, I know I can, just like you can read me," he told her.

"Then what am I thinking?"

"How the hell can two people fall in love this fast?" Chuck told her. She didn't say a word. She couldn't. She was currently being deafened by her inner eight year-old screaming. "Just like I'm thinking, how can someone that had shut everyone out miss the crack that you not only slipped through, but that has blown open? I thought my heart was shut off from anyone that wasn't friends or family. I was wrong. It was only open for you."

"How do you know I'm not playing you?" Sarah asked.

"Because when I kissed you at our wedding..." he trailed off.

"That's it?" Sarah asked.

For the first time since she met him, she saw a confident grin on his face. "That's everything," he said softly.

}o{

Now

"He cracked this?" Graham asked, holding up the USB.

"In minutes," Sarah replied. "He's not working for you."

Graham sat there, nodding. "But what if you two worked with me?"

Sarah looked at Chuck. Chuck grinned. "Is there anything you're wrong about?" he asked.

"Hang around fifty or so years and see for yourself," she told him

"Deal," Chuck answered.

A/N: the. angst.

Chapter 10: The Love Boat Ch 10

A/N: None of you all took my double dog dare. Don't blame you....

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

They stood there, staring at each other. "So," Chuck said softly. "What do we do?"

Sarah was at war. Not about what to do. Oh no. She was at war about how to do it. Did they go slow? Did they go fast? How fast? And then...then there was the eight-year-old in the back of her mind.

The precise rating of kisses is a terribly difficult thing, often leading to great controversy, because although everyone agrees with the formula of affection times purity times intensity times duration, no one has ever been completely satisfied with how much weight each element should receive. But on any system, there are five that everyone agrees deserve full marks.

Well, this one left them all behind.

He was watching her eyes, her face, and realized she had come to a decision.

"Sarah?"

She simply reached up, and pulled him down to her. If a bomb went off, she wouldn't have cared. If a marching band had made their way into the room, she wouldn't have cared. If someone had tried to take a shot at her, the bullet would have bounced off them. She. Was. Kissing. Him.

Eventually, they stopped. She didn't know how much time had passed, but he was completely discombobulated and she wasn't much better. He made eye contact with her, and she couldn't stop the words if she tried.

"Do I love you? My God, if your love were a grain of sand, mine would be a universe of beaches."

He stared at her. "It's from-"

"The Princess Bride," he finished for her. "For the record. I love you."

"Fine, I said it first," she told him.

"Okay, I'm going to let you have that," he began.

"That's what she said," she retorted, the half smile returning.

"But what do we do?" he asked.

"Bed," Sarah said. And she realized how he took it as he turned a lighter shade than normal of red. "Sleep, Chuck, sleep."

"Good idea," Chuck agreed. He looked like he now had his wits about him, and she couldn't have that.

"Unless...." And there went his wits. She took his wrist gently in her grip. "We still need to talk and figure some things out."

"I just need to know, is it your intent to tease me constantly?" he asked her. She loved the look on his face.

"Is it your intent to warn the bird about me?" Sarah asked.

"There is no warning about you," Chuck told her. "To quote another space journey line regarding warnings about you, resistance is futile."

"You keep saying the nicest things about me, Chuck Bartowski," she told him.

"You keep doing things making me say nice things, Sarah Bartowski," he replied.

She went quiet. Inside, she was telling the eight-year-old it was time to go to bed. Things were warm within her that...she didn't know if these parts had felt like this ever. EVER.

"Oh, that is not fair."

He grinned.

"Life isn't fair, Bill. We tell our children that it is, but it's a terrible thing to do. It's not only a lie, but it's a cruel lie. Life is not fair, and it never has been, and it's never going to be."

Her mouth dropped open. "Did you....did you just use *The Princess Bride* against me?!"

"Well, you've been using everything at your disposal against me since we've met," Chuck countered.

"And I'm going to keep doing it," she told him.

"Good," he replied. Her smile grew. "Hit me with your best shot."

Sarah smiled. That was a dangerous thing to say to a woman who had spent her life planning for contingencies.

She leaned forward. Her lips were right by his ear. She said softly, not a whisper, but softly. "Do you want to see the new socks I bought?" He closed his eyes. He opened them and she was in front of him, smiling impishly. "And that wasn't even in the top half of my best shots."

"I'm going to die a happy man," he told her.

"But not for a long, long time," she said. He leaned forward and gently kissed her lips, closed mouth and then pulled away. "That was not fair."

"I know."

She couldn't stop the grin on her face if she tried. She studied him for a minute. "You really do mean all of it, don't you?"

"I do," he said softly.

}o{

She awoke, her back to his front. His arms around her. Both of them modestly dressed. And she felt loved.

His thumb was tracing patterns on her hand. "Apparently I'm into thumbs rubbing my hand," she muttered.

"And tall nerds," came the voice behind her.

"Eh, maybe one in particular," she teased.

He smiled against her hair. "Good."

"I need to protect you, Chuck."

"Feel pretty protected right now," Chuck told her.

"I want this...us...and I don't want you to one day question it," she said. He started to move, but she gripped his arm around her, holding him in place. "I don't want you to stay married because I've discovered you're a sleep cuddler and I'm apparently okay with that."

"I had to cuddle because you steal the sheets," he retorted.

"Pffth, whatever," she said, grinning at the teasing. "Slow, okay?"

"I mean...okay," Chuck told her. "We are married."

"Yes, and if we get a divorce..." Sarah trailed off.

"I feel like there's a story there," Chuck said.

There was silence for a moment.

"My dad was a con man," she began.

}o{

"Okay, now I get it," Chuck said, holding her tighter. She twisted in his arms to face him, and looked him right in the eye. "I get it."

"I need you to be sure that..."

"Sarah, I love you for the person you are," he told her.

"I believe you, just..."

"Be sure," Chuck said, nodding.

}o{

Now

"So, you're suggesting a partnership?" Sarah asked.

"I'm suggesting you work with me to analyze situations, decrypt things that need decryption," Graham told them. "I need people I can trust. And it's obvious you two trust each other. It's not even the marriage, it's what you two pulled off in that setting on the ship. You made it. You had no business making it."

"We didn't," she said, squeezing Chuck's hand. "Yes we did," Chuck disagreed. "We were sure about each other. We are sure about each other." "We are," Sarah agreed.

A/N: Angstiest angst

Chapter 11: The Love Boat Ch 11

A/N: More of whatever this is

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

"Okay," Chuck said, sitting up. "Time for a serious conversation."

"About my socks, your bird, or Ellie being upset with you for not being at your wedding?" Sarah asked, sitting up and facing him, the half-smile on her face.

"Woman," he said in a low voice. "I am trying to focus, so can you please not bring up the socks?"

"So you're not focusing on my socks?"

"I am, and that's the problem," Chuck told her.

"Why is it a problem?" Sarah asked, leaning forward slightly.

"Because there are men who want to capture you and do unspeakable things to you," Chuck said.

Sarah watched him for a moment.

He was trying so hard to be dead serious, and it was a serious moment. The problem was it was also adorable.

Which, unfortunately for him, made it much harder for her to behave.

"Okay," she said, trying to sound serious.

Chuck narrowed his eyes.

"You're smiling."

"No, I'm not."

"You absolutely are."

"I am listening to you."

"You're listening to me while smiling."

Sarah's smile grew. She let out a sigh. "Oh, you're right, that is a problem, and I should be focusing on it."

"You should," Chuck agreed.

"The only one doing unspeakable things to me should be you," Sarah told him. She watched him break. "I'm sorry. You're trying to keep me safe, which you don't need to do, and I know I'm safe here, and I like being with you, watching you..." she gestured towards him. "Do that."

"I'm going to have a long talk with my bird when I get back," Chuck muttered under his breath.

"Do you think the bird can help?"

"No," Chuck admitted. "But at least whatever the bird thinks, it won't say it and melt my brain." He held up his hand. "I know, you like melting my brain, but we need to see if we can figure out who is after you and why."

"Oh, I know why," Sarah said, and reached into her shirt, pulling out the chain that had the USB on it. "It's this."

"What's that?" Chuck asked.

"It's classified," Sarah said. Chuck nodded. "It all started a few weeks ago," Sarah began. Chuck quickly focused on the story she was telling him instead of the fact that she was telling him classified information.

}o{"Should you have told me all of that?" Chuck asked.

She shrugged. "I've decided you have the highest security clearance," Sarah said. "Sarah clearance."

Chuck stared at her.

"That's a thing?"

"It is now."

“What's the highest level?”

Sarah looked at him.

“You.”

His expression softened.

“Sarah...”

“Don't make it weird.”

“I wasn't.”

“You were about to.”

“I was going to say thank you.”

She smiled.

“Then thank you is acceptable.”

He smiled back.

“Sarah clearance.”

“Highest level.”

“I like it.”

“I know.”

“Jesus,” he breathed out. “Do you think I could see that USB?” She reached behind her neck and undid the necklace. “If I can get into it, maybe we can figure out who is after you.”

“Chuck, you’d have to be a computer genius to do that,” Sarah told him.

He got off the bed, went and got his laptop, and opened it. He looked up at her.

“So...about that black card....”

}o{

"You cracked it," she said, staring at the monitor some time later. "You...this is supposed to be heavily encrypted."

"It is," Chuck said with a shrug. She stared at him. "I'm just...good."

She stared at the screen.

Then at Chuck.

Then back at the screen.

"You really did it."

Chuck shrugged.

"I told you I was good."

Sarah smiled.

"I know." He looked at her.

There was something different in her voice this time.

Not teasing.

Pride.

"You're impressed."

"Very."

Chuck tried not to smile.

He failed.

Sarah watched him.

"You're adorable when you're proud of yourself and trying not to show it."

"And you're adorable when you're impressed with me."

She blinked.

"I'm not adorable. I'm a big bad spy."

He looked at those gorgeous blue eyes and said, "Yes, yes, you are!" and resumed typing.

Eight-year-old Sarah did some somersaulting on Sarah's shoulder. She said, "Bartowski, that was smooth."

"I'm learning."

"I bet you are," she said softly. He stopped typing and slowly turned to her. The look she was giving him left no doubt about what she meant.

"You're making me very sure," he told her.

"Nope," she said, shaking her head.

"Okay, so, we need to check the cameras footage against the list of passengers," Chuck said, going back to the laptop. She put her chin on his shoulder, watching him type. He looked over at her.

"Is this okay?"

"I think I'm going to have to insist you do this every time I work for now on," he admitted.

"What will your bird think?"

"Oh, he will be very judgmental, but I don't care," Chuck told her, going back to the list. "I downloaded the list of passengers and their pictures when I got in earlier."

"Wait, how is my stuff in here?" Sarah asked.

"I got your picture off the cameras," Chuck told her. "That's why it took me more than two minutes. The list of passengers was on a computer that is not connected to the Internet. The cameras use...how much do you care about this?"

"I don't," Sarah said honestly. "But I enjoy hearing you talk about it."

"Well, the cameras are hackable, and I am running the pictures of each of the passengers against the images from the cameras," Chuck explained. "Then, if there are images on the camera that don't match, I'm running them against these files on the

USB.” The computer made a pinging sound. “And, so far, I’ve found four, wait, five.”

She looked at him. “You know you’re my wheelbarrow, right?”

He looked over at her. “I’m also not mostly dead,” he added.

Sarah smiled.

“You really are my wheelbarrow.”

Chuck looked at her.

“I think that's the strangest romantic compliment I've ever received.”

“It wasn't meant to be romantic.”

“That's somehow worse.”

She laughed softly.

Then her expression changed.

“But it is.”

Chuck waited.

“You make things possible,” she said.

His smile faded into something softer.

“Sarah...”

She touched his hand.

“That's what I meant.”

He squeezed her hand.

“Then I'm happy to be your wheelbarrow.”

She felt something inside stir, composed herself, and said, “I find that very convenient...and inconvenient,” Sarah told him. “Not inconvenient that you’re alive, inconvenient that you are alive and I have to behave.”

“Need to talk to my bird about your definition of behaving,” Chuck muttered. Sarah smiled at him.

She shouldn’t have been surprised. Eight year-old her had been quiet for some time. As usual, when she showed up, she had a quote that rocked Sarah to her core.

Don’t expect too much from life, Buttercup told herself as she rode along. Learn to be satisfied with what you have.

“When we get back, I will have to show you what misbehaving actually looks like,” Sarah told him. His fingers froze on the keyboard. “And your bird can go fly south for the winter if he doesn’t like it.”

“Seven,” Chuck choked out. “There are seven men trying to...”

“Have their way with me?” Sarah asked. Chuck turned to her, his eyes wide. “And none of them are the man I want to have his way with me.”

Chuck stared at her.

Sarah waited.

“You're still standing,” she observed.

“I-I.....”

“I thought you might need a moment.”

“I may need several.”

Sarah smiled.

“Progress.”

“I'm choosing to see it that way.”

She leaned closer.

“Good choice.”

Chuck swallowed.

“I’m known to stumble upon those occasionally.”

He didn't pass out. He was more surprised than anyone about that.

}o{

Now

"Outside consultants," Sarah said. "I am officially no longer a CIA officer."

Chuck looked at her.

"So we're partners now?"

Sarah nodded.

"Partners."

He smiled. "I like that."

"I know."

"You keep saying that."

"Because you keep making it obvious."

He smiled wider.

"I really do love my life."

Sarah looked at him.

"So do I."

"Agent," Graham began.

"Director, I don't want anyone to have the ability to tell me what to do ever again," Sarah told him. "Okay," Graham said, nodding. He turned in his chair to the file beside him.

Sarah leaned over to Chuck. "However you are allowed to make all the suggestions you want," she told him.

"God, I really, really love my life," he muttered. Sarah smiled as she leaned back to where she had been previously.

A/N: Angstiest angst that ever angsted.

Chapter 12: The Love Boat Ch 12

A/N: Is the captain of this boat named Stubing? Are you old enough to get that joke? If so you should probably have had a colonoscopy by now....or two...

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

"We can't stay in this cabin forever," Sarah told him the next day. The two had spent the previous day teasing each other...well, let's be honest, it was more ninety/ten teasing in one person's favor than the other. They were also studying pictures of the seven men and Chuck finding out everything about them. During this time, Chuck told Sarah about his fascination with fish, told her he had named the bird Edward because, while it was opinionated, it seemed to do so respectfully, and told her about his childhood and Ellie raising him.

"And while it is good for the cover for us to be in here, there are two downsides. One, we're always on the defensive with these men; we need to figure out what they're going to do and understand their plan." Chuck nodded, thinking that was an excellent point. "And two, and probably the more important of the two, you might make a bad choice." His eyes went wide, and she held up her hand so she could finish.

"Chuck, we're in an enclosed space. There is nowhere for this to breathe. I'm not saying you'll make a choice based on your libido, but IF you make a choice now, you will honor that choice regardless of how things go. That's who you are," she finished.

"You're protecting me," Chuck said softly.

She nodded.

"I'm trying to protect you," she admitted.

"I know."

"From me."

Chuck reached for her hand.

"You don't have to."

"I do."

"Why?"

She looked at him.

"Because I've never had someone I wanted to protect from myself."

Chuck smiled softly.

"Then we're both learning."

Sarah squeezed his hand.

"Together."

"Together."

"You know that is affecting my choice?" She tilted her head, confused.

"You protecting me is showing me why I should choose what I've already chosen."

She tilted her head the other way and gave him a look. He swallowed. "Fine, you want me to be sure." She nodded. "As you wish."

"Oh, we need to get out of here right now," she said, an angry look on her face, but it wasn't anger at him. Chuck knew that and couldn't stop the smile. She looked back at him with a look that read, "How damn *dare* you." What he didn't know was she was being assaulted by an eight-year-old. He saw her calculate something, and then, with a smile that was aimed at him, that had a touch of...dare he say, evil? In it....she spoke. "I will never doubt again."

He stared at her, swallowed, and replied. "There will never be a need." She nodded, turned, and walked out.

"I felt like she just said, 'To the pain,' to me," he muttered. "I don't know how I lost that, but I know I did." He realized Edward wasn't there to listen to him, shook his head, and walked out.

}o{

It was mere moments later that he found out exactly how he had lost. "Sarah, I am not that type of husband," he said in a strained voice. She lifted her head from the article of clothing she was looking at. He *swore* he saw a halo over her head, pure innocence on her face, and possibly heard a chorus of angels singing. "There...there isn't a lot of material to that...."

"Bikini," Sarah said, looking back at the blue...*tiny* piece of fabric in her hand.

"Bikini," Chuck agreed, nodding, and looking like he was melting on the inside. "I worry about you being burned...the back....it doesn't cover....much."

The smile seemed to increase, the halo brighten, the innocence get even more innocent, and the angels sang louder. "Luckily I have my husband here to make sure I'm lathered in suntan lotion."

He tried to speak. A noise came out. What word it actually was, who knew?

"Now, when you apply it, I need you to be *very....very...thorough*."

A choking sound came out this time.

"You wouldn't want me to burn would you?" He managed to shake his head no, and then somehow gained control of his faculties.

"This is breathing?" he said in a strained voice.

"We're in an open space, not forced together in close quarters," she said, stepping towards him. Her voice was already low, but she leaned towards his ear with a smile on her face that Chuck could only describe as...*naughty*. "Plus, Ralph is across the room, watching everyone. He's not paying any more attention to us than he is anyone else." She leaned back, a proud smile on her face.

Then, he shocked her.

In the best way. He reached over to the fabric of the garment and felt it with his fingers. "Soft, feels comfortable," he said in a low voice. He lifted it near her face, her eyes going wide. "I love how it's very similar to the color of your eyes. Of course, it can't be.

Your eyes have this...I want to call it a flash, but it's not the right word. All I know is when you get excited, and God, do I love seeing you excited."

He had paused. On purpose. It was at that moment she realized she was holding her breath.

She wasn't sure if it was because of what he was saying, that she didn't want to breathe in case she missed what he said, or because eight year-old her was screaming into her ear.

KISS HIM!

His left thumb caressed her right cheek. Years of training were the only reason her knee didn't buckle. "I would get lost in your eyes seeing you...*excited*."

"Chuck," she managed to get out. "When you say...*excited*...."

"Be sure," he told her. And with that, he stepped away and walked over to some tops she had been looking at earlier. "What about this? Do you like this pattern?"

Sarah stared at him.

He had walked away.

Just walked away.

She looked down at the bikini.

Then toward Chuck.

He was casually looking through the shirts.

She narrowed her eyes.

"That's not fair."

He looked over. "What?"

"You know exactly what you did."

A small smile appeared.

"Maybe."

Sarah shook her head.

"I'm going to enjoy getting even."

"I was counting on that."

"To the pain, Bartowski," she muttered.

"Inconceivable," he replied in the same low tone. He looked over to where Ralph was. Past him was a sandwich shop. "I've been wanting to try that place."

"We should try it," Sarah told him.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

Her jaw twitched, but she held in the laugh. She stepped up to him. *"Let me explain... No, there is too much. Let me sum up,"* she said softly. He grinned. *"I love you. Okay? Want it louder? I LOVE YOU. Spell it out, should I? I ell-oh-vee-ee why-oh-you. Want it backward? You love I."*

There was no sound from eight year-old her. She had passed out with joy.

Sarah looked at him for a long moment.

There was no teasing left in her expression.

No game.

Just Sarah.

"I don't think you understand what you've done to me."

Chuck's smile faded.

"What?"

"You made this easy."

He looked confused.

"How?"

She reached for his hand.

“Choosing you.”

He squeezed her hand.

“Good.” Sarah smiled.

Sarah looked him right in the eye. “Where ever you go...I go.”

“No,” Chuck said. “You already know that I have a shy bladder.”

She burst out in laughter.

}o{

Now

“These seven we have in custody,” Graham began. “Agent, you...you are one of the best, but..” He looked from Sarah to Chuck. “He’s a civilian.” Chuck nodded. “How?”

Sarah grinned. “I had a wheelbarrow.”

Chuck smiled as Graham looked more confused than ever.

A/N: You know for five months I had been mostly dead inside. The good news, I wasn’t all dead. Thank you all for hanging with me. Love ya.

Chapter 13: The Love Boat Ch 13

A/N: I have received the cease and desist from your doctors. Your big boys and girls. You know what you sign up for with this mess. You're welcome

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

"What do you think?" he heard her ask, his eyes glued to his monitor. He swallowed, shut his eyes, steeled himself, lifted his head, and let out a small sigh of relief as he saw she was dressed in normal clothes. "Did you think you were getting a fashion show or something...Mr....*Bartowski*?" she asked.

"How the hell did you make my name sound like that?" he blurted out, nearly unable to function.

She turned the half smile up to the full smile. "I told you, we needed room to...breathe." She heard his breath catch. "I was asking you what you thought about our seven merry men that are trying to find that poor little ole spy."

"They're watching sections of the ship," Chuck told her. She nodded, and walked over to him to see the computer, suddenly serious. The flirtatiousness wasn't gone, just dialed back under ten. "Fred," he said, pointing to one man watching a section of the ship. "He's got a drinking problem, the rest know it and have him watching the spot they think we won't be in." Sarah nodded. "He's missed two different check-ins and they aren't even concerned when he does."

"Where's his room?" Sarah asked.

"Three doors down," Chuck told her. He turned to her, he could see her wheels turning.

Sarah watched the screen.

"You noticed that?"

Chuck shrugged.

"I notice things."

"I've noticed."

He looked at her.

"Was that a compliment?"

"Yes."

"Can I get that in writing?"

"No."

"Verbal confirmation?"

"No."

"Witnesses?"

Sarah smiled.

"Don't push it."

Chuck turned back to the screen. "Worth a try."

"There's a CIA substation in[redacted], our next stop," Sarah told Chuck. "May I?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, trying to hand her the laptop. She "tsked" him, sat down in front of him, pulled one of his arms around her waist and began to type. "So you can watch and see if I do anything wrong."

"And if you do?" Chuck asked.

"I mean I won't...unless I do to see how you respond," Sarah said with a shrug.

"Jesus Christ my wife is so hot and bad-ass," he muttered. She stopped and slowly turned to look over her shoulder at him. "I know, I know, let it breathe."

"You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means," Sarah told him.

"Inconceivable," Chuck replied. She gave him a peck on the lips and went back to the computer.

"There," Sarah said. "A CIA substation is there," she pointed to a nondescript building on the map. "And there is a bar. Fred has a record that would get him picked up."

"So then we'd be down to six," Chuck noted. "And we'd have a room to bring in someone."

"There's no one to bring in," Sarah said, shaking her head.

"Yeah, and anyone you brought in, would be suspicious, especially with Fred disappearing," Chuck said. Sarah straightened. "What?"

"Well, I say there's no one, but there's...no one in the CIA," Sarah amended.

"Okay," Chuck said. "Look, if it's an ex-boyfriend, please, bring in anyone that will keep you safe." She laid down the computer and turned on the bed to look him in the eye.

"What? Ex-girlfriend?"

"No," Sarah said shaking her head. "Chuck, if I bring her in-"

"Sarah, if there is someone who can help..." He trailed off. "There's still six of them, and let's be honest, if it gets physical, I'm a liability."

"You don't understand she's...she's..."

"She's what?" Chuck asked.

"She's Carina," Sarah said. "And-and I know that makes no sense-"

"No, no-no," Chuck said, shaking his head. "It's exactly how I'd describe Morgan, my best friend."

"She is not...." Sarah trailed off. "Damn it, she is my best friend," she muttered.

"Okay, then she would help you?" Chuck asked.

"Yes, but-" Sarah said.

"No, no buts," Chuck told her. "If she can help you, then we need her."

"She is going to make you very uncomfortable," Sarah said. "And please believe me when I say I am underselling it."

"Don't care," Chuck told her. "Does she have the ability to help you?"

"Yes," Sarah said. Sarah stared at him.

"You really don't care?"

"No."

"She is going to embarrass you."

"Probably."

"She is going to ask questions."

"I'll survive."

"She may tell embarrassing stories."

Chuck paused.

"How embarrassing?"

Sarah smiled.

"Very."

He sighed.

"Okay. That part concerns me." She laughed.

"But you still want her here."

Chuck took her hand.

"If she's someone you trust, she's someone I want here."

Sarah's expression softened.

"Even if she makes you miserable?"

He smiled.

"I've already married you."

Sarah laughed.

"Fair."

"Then Wesley, you need your Inigo Montoya," Chuck told her.

"She narrowed her eyes at him. "Does that make you Buttercup?" Sarah asked.

"Pfffth, no," Chuck said. "I'm clearly the wheelbarrow." He was laughing, but the look on her face confused him. "What?"

"When I saw you outside, with your sister and her family, that line went through my head," Sarah told him. *"I mean, if we only had a wheelbarrow, that would be something ."*

"I'm glad to be your wheelbarrow," Chuck told her.

"I know," Sarah said. "It's why my heart told me to trust you and it makes no sense."

"I agree," Chuck replied. "You feeling for me makes no sense, me feeling for you makes no sense. But I'm glad we both feel this way."

Sarah smiled.

"You know what the funny part is?"

"What?"

"I never thought I'd trust someone like you."

Chuck raised an eyebrow.

"Someone like me?"

"Someone who makes me laugh." He smiled.

"That's a serious security concern."

"Very."

"Should I be worried?"

"No."

She leaned against him.

"I think I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be."

Chuck wrapped an arm around her.

"Good."

Sarah smiled.

"My wheelbarrow."

Chuck sighed.

"I'm never escaping that, am I?"

"No."

"Worth it."

"She's going to be pure chaos," Sarah told him.

Chuck nodded. "Okay, as opposed to what this has been the past few days?" Chuck pointed out.

Sarah narrowed her eyes. "You don't understand what I mean."

"I understand chaos."

"No. You understand normal chaos."

Chuck frowned. "There are different kinds?"

"With Carina, yes."

"How?"

Sarah thought about it for a moment.

"Most people create chaos because something goes wrong."

Chuck nodded.

"Carina creates chaos because she decides something would be more interesting if it went the Carina way."

Chuck's expression changed.

“That sounds worse.”

“It is.”

He stared at her.

“How much worse?”

Sarah smiled.

“You'll find out.”

Sarah leaned in. “In other news, if you keep this up, I am definitely going to model my socks for you.”

“I wish Edward had a phone so I could text him that you’re going to meet him,” Chuck countered.

Sarah stared at him.

“You really are getting better at this.”

“At what?”

“Being married to me.”

Chuck smiled. “I'm studying hard every day.”

“Good.”

She leaned closer.

“Because Carina will definitely do pop quizzes.”

Chuck's smile disappeared.

“I'm suddenly less confident about this marriage.”

“Awful presumptuous,” Sarah said.

“You haven’t told me I was wrong yet,” Chuck told her.

She leaned across the bed, grabbed her phone, sat back up, and began to type.

Sarah looked at the phone.

Chuck noticed.

"You're thinking about it."

"About what?"

"Texting Carina."

Sarah sighed. "Yes."

"You could change your mind."

"No."

"Just checking."

Sarah started typing.

Chuck watched her. "Should I be worried?"

"Yes."

He looked at her.

"That was remarkably fast."

"You asked a simple question."

"Right."

SOS

Do you remember when I got that copy of Sister Act in [redacted]

She finished the message and put the phone down.

Chuck looked at it.

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"No dramatic warning?"

Sarah smiled.

"I already gave you one."

"True."

He looked at the phone again.

"How long before she gets here?"

Sarah considered it.

"Knowing Carina?"

"Yes?"

"She'll probably make an entrance."

"Last chance," she told him.

"Oh, I'm sure," Chuck told her.

"Your bed at your house," Sarah began. Chuck sat there, quiet. "A double?"

"No," Chuck replied. "A queen." Sarah had a half-smile on her face as she hit the send button on the text. She looked down and saw the two wide-eyed eyeball emojis. Her phone rang.

She hit the button, put the phone to her ear, smiling at Chuck the entire time. "Carina," she said.

"Well, well, well," Sarah heard.

}o{

Now

"To be fair, Director, we did bring in Carina," Sarah told him.

Langston's eyes went wide. "And he survived?" Langston asked.

"He not only survived, but he impressed her," Sarah told him.

Langston Graham had been off balance all day long. Now he was more off balance than ever.

A/N: Warning: Carina landfall next chapter.

Chapter 14: The Love Boat Ch 14

A/N: Batten down the hatches...it's Carina.A/N 2: If you enjoy this chapter, send some love to KaulfrStonemason. I wrote this chapter based on my thoughts. Then he read it and said, "Well, what if Carina did...this?" To which I said, "WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT!?!". He's been the best. Thank you my friend.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

They watched as the bar was raided and several people were walked out, cuffed.

"You take me to the nicest places," Chuck said to Sarah. She tried to stop the laugh, but found she didn't want to. "Okay, I have to admit, that's from one of the *Thin Man* movies."

She turned to him, an eyebrow raised. "The old black and white ones where he's a detective and she's rich and loves seeing him do what he does best?"

"Yeah," Chuck said, nodding.

She smiled. "I get how she feels about watching her husband do what he does best," she said softly.

"Sarah," he said in a low voice.

"I would love to tease you unmercifully right now, I mean, you have no idea HOW much I want to, but-"

"SARAH! DARLING!" they heard from across the street. Chuck turned and saw a tall woman waving. A stunning woman. A breathtaking woman. And yet, she didn't hold a candle to Sarah.

Chuck turned back to Sarah. "Sorry," she mouthed. "CARINA!" she responded, and ran past Chuck towards her. The two crashed into each other in a hug like two long lost siblings, and that's when Chuck remembered her warning last night.

Sister Act is code for us playing sisters.

He saw Carina looking at him and knew deep, deep in his heart that while this was best for the case, for him...it was going to be, 'To the pain'.

Carina pulled away from Sarah's embrace and walked straight in Chuck's direction.

Her eyes laser focused on Chuck. So much that he felt the urge to run, imagining Sarah screaming at him, "Run, Chuck, run!"

"And you are?"

Chuck opened his mouth, the image of him running on the deck still in his mind.

Carina held up a hand. "No. Let me guess."

She looked Chuck up and down.

"New partner?"

Sarah answered first.

"Chuck."

Carina looked at Sarah.

Then Chuck.

Then Sarah again.

"Chuck."

"Yes."

"Just Chuck? I can't believe people still call their kids just Chuck!"

Sarah sighed. "He's my Chuck. We're married."

Carina froze.

Chuck froze.

Sarah froze, seeing Carina frozen.

"Your what?"

"My Chuck, my husband."

Carina slowly turned toward Chuck.

“To him?”

Chuck looked slightly offended. “I’m standing right here.”

Carina ignored him.

Sarah rolled her eyes. “Yes, Carina. To him.”

Carina narrowed her eyes.

“And you like him?”

Sarah's expression changed.

Just slightly.

Carina caught it.

“Oh.”

Sarah frowned. “What?”

Carina smiled.

“Oh, you really like him.”

Chuck gave her an uncertain smile.

“Hi.”

Carina looked back at Sarah.

Sarah pointed toward the captain. “We have a job.”

Carina's smile grew.

“Later you have some explaining to do, Sis.”

}o{

Carina walked beside Sarah.

“Husband?”

"It's complicated."

"I can see that."

"We're undercover."

"I figured that part out."

Carina glanced at Chuck.

"Is the husband part undercover too?"

Sarah hesitated.

"It's complicated."

Carina's eyebrows went up.

"Interesting."

Chuck watched in equal parts horror and fascination as the two women went to work on the captain. IF the poor captain had time to think, he might have found it odd how quickly Fred's cabin was cleaned out and cleared.

IF.

Because he was assaulted, and that was the only word Chuck could use, by two women who called themselves sisters.

Chuck couldn't keep up with the stories that were battering down the poor captain. It was an impressive tactic, and one that truly raised no red flags.

At one point, Carina turned toward Chuck.

"And you have never been to the FARM house, right, Chuck?"

Chuck froze.

Sarah's eyes widened for half a second.

Then Carina smiled.

"Of course, he's never been to the farmhouse."

Chuck looked between them. "There's a farmhouse?"

Carina's eyes lit up.

Sarah lost some of her composure and immediately regretted asking for Carina's help.

Carina turned back to the captain.

"Oh, not farmhouse-level relationship yet, hmmm. Chuckles!"

Chuck stared at Sarah.

Sarah mouthed, "Sorry."

Carina smiled.

She had just learned something else.

They were two women whose families were joined when they were small and became besties. Not just besties, but BESTIES. Apparently they did everything together until two years ago when Carina, at the encouragement of her bawling sister, took a job as a museum curator in some country no one actually got the name of, and there wasn't enough oxygen in the room to think to ask the question or ask the question.

This was the first time they had gotten to see each other, because Sarah was apparently a first-grade teacher and their family didn't have a lot of money. This was Sarah's first time out of the country, and yes, she had forgotten her luggage, but her boyfriend, now husband, was in tech and had money, and that's why she had been so excited and forgotten her luggage at the airport.

Then Carina, looking sideways at Sarah, said, "Sarah always got this distracted when she is in love with someone."

Sarah's head snapped toward her.

"Carina."

"What?"

"We're talking about my luggage."

"I know."

Carina looked at Chuck.

"She gets very protective too."

Chuck's face immediately broke into a half-smile.

Sarah glared at him.

"Don't."

"I didn't say anything."

"Your face was saying it."

Carina's eyes widened.

"Oh."

She looked between them.

"This is going to be so much fun."

Chuck still wasn't sure why they had come on separate flights. He THOUGHT it was because he had been at a conference and she came and joined him for the cruise, and Sarah thought that the airport would take care of getting her luggage to the ship, but...he got lost during the stories.

The two were masterful; they would cut into each other's sentences like they had known each other for years, and go off on tangents that ended with each nearly crying and them both hugging each other.

As people walked by and heard bits of the story, Chuck would hear them comment things like, "The captain should let her on. It's so touching to see family reunited like this."

As he watched, part of him wondered- the part Jill had broken in him...had she played him the way she was playing the captain.

He was positive she hadn't.

He was.

Deep down, he was.

However.

His brain.

Carina, while keeping the assault on the captain, noticed.

Sarah kept looking at Chuck.

Not checking on him.

Looking at him.

Carina had known Sarah long enough to know the difference.

Oh, this is bad.

Or, more accurately...

This is very, very good.

As Chuck's brain began to wonder, he did all he could to not change his expression.

He was human.

And that's when it happened. Right in the middle of her story, she turned just enough to see him, and the delighted expression on her face changed. She decided to do something.

Carina stopped for half a second.

Sarah caught her.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Carina."

"I'm just learning things."

"You don't need to learn anything."

Carina smiled.

“Of course I don’t need to, but that doesn’t keep me from learning it anyway.”

She turned, walked over to him, took his face gently in her hands, and kissed him.

He thought he heard a “get it, Sis,” murmured, but he wasn’t sure.

Carina had been suspicious.

Now she was certain.

Sarah was gone.

Completely, hopelessly, adorably gone.

Carina was going to have so much fun with this.

Sarah pulled away, looked at him, and then back over to the captain and Carina.

“Can you give me a sec with him?” Sarah asked.

“I got this,” Carina replied, a smile on her face. The captain looked exhausted. Sarah took him by the hand and led him back to their cabin. Every time he started to speak, she gently shook her head, and he stopped.

She had him walk in first, and she followed. She shut the door and rested against it.

“What you saw up there is not what happened between you and me.”

“I know that,” Chuck said. “You didn’t overwhelm me the way you two are.”

“No, Chuck,” Sarah said. She walked over and took his hands. “Up there, that...that was all fake. When I met you, something in me...something I thought was gone...the eight-year-old girl that believed in fairy tales and happily ever after, she told me, you have to tell him the truth.”

He was silent for a second. “That’s what she said?”

“No,” Sarah said, shaking her head. “She reminded me of a wheelbarrow.” He smiled at that. “Why do you think I’ve been so insistent that you be sure?”

He squeezed her hands. “Sarah,” he began.

"I told you I would never doubt again," she said. "I need you to be there. I need you not to doubt me...us. I've had too much of that in my life, and I can't...I can't have another relationship wondering if someone is questioning my love for them."

"Your...your love for me?" Chuck asked. "Sarah-"

She put a finger to his lips. "No, you work this out in your mind however you have to; I understand."

He kissed the finger on his lips and gently moved it away. "I don't doubt what I feel for you," Chuck told her.

"Well, then I guess I need you not to doubt what I feel for you, and until I'm sure...I should probably stop teasing you about my socks," Sarah said. "I see," Chuck replied.

She grinned. "You don't want me to stop teasing you, do you?"

"I don't," Chuck admitted. She closed what little space was left between them. "I need to tell you something very important."

"What's that?" Chuck asked.

"True love is the best thing in the world," Sarah told him. She grinned, and his smile grew. *"Except for cough drops."*

"Cough drops are criminally underrated," Chuck agreed. Sarah nodded. "I mean, if your head or nose is clogged, you can take one, and it clears that up."

"Multiple uses," Sarah said.

"Sarah, I don't think you're running a con or some op on me," Chuck told her.

"I know you don't think so," Sarah replied. "I need you to know it."

Chuck started to speak when the door opened quickly. "Damn it," Carina muttered. "I was hoping to catch you two going at it. So, Chuck."

"Yes?"

"How long have you been married?"

Chuck glanced at Sarah.

“That's complicated.”

Carina nodded.

“That's what she said.”

Sarah closed her eyes.

“Carina.”

“What? I'm gathering information.”

“About the case?”

Carina smiled.

“Sure.”

The two shared a glance and realized they would have to continue this at another time.

In spite of Sarah's warning about the focus, Carina continued with her investigation.

“What's her favorite pizza?”

Chuck answered, “Veggie, no olives”.

Carina blinked.

“Okay.”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“You asked.”

“I did.”

She looked at Sarah.

“He's been paying attention.”

Sarah tried not to smile.

Chuck noticed.

Carina noticed Chuck noticing.

Her smile grew.

“Oh, this is *really* fun.”

Carina asked Chuck to leave the “sisters” to improve their plan.

“So.”

Sarah looked at her. “So?”

“Chuck.”

Sarah sighed.

“What about him?”

Carina smiled. “How is he?”

Sarah narrowed her eyes.

“As a person.”

“Uh-huh.”

“As a husband.”

“Carina.”

“I’m just trying to understand the situation.”

“You understand the situation.”

“Not completely.”

Sarah stared at her.

Carina grinned.

“I haven't gotten to the important questions yet.”

}o{

Now

“And everything went smoothly with Carina there?” Graham asked. “Define smoothly,” Chuck answered.

“As smoothly as things can run with Carina,” Sarah replied. Graham sank his head into his hands. “He’s taking this well.”

A/N: David...seriously...is that angst? Did you do it? Did you give us...angst? *rolls eyes, walks away muttering*

Chapter 15: The Love Boat Ch 15

A/N: You know, I got to thinking. Wesley, when he becomes the pirate, he becomes...suave...charming. Now Chuck can be charming...and has certain...nerd chic...but suave....we're missing...suave...IF ONLY there were someone...suave. What's that? Do the freaking typity typity? FINE.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

*Then [redacted] *writer's note* I asked Carina where [redacted] was. She told me I was too young to know.*

Chuck found himself in the bar. Carina had not only gotten herself on the ship, but somehow got two complimentary spa sessions. Chuck was pretty sure they were free on the cruise, but he could also see the captain promising Carina anything to get her to leave him alone.

"There he is," a voice came from behind him. Chuck turned, not sure if he was being talked to or not. There stood the bartender, cleaning a glass. He was tall, with gray hair, and Chuck just found the man...suave. "Started the cruise as a bachelor, and now a happily married man."

"Well," Chuck began, but didn't know what to say.

"But, it's creeping up, isn't it?" the bartender continued.

"What is?" Chuck asked.

"Hurt." Chuck couldn't answer. It was true. He hadn't been able to stop thinking about Jill. "You always hear people say, 'well, what if it doesn't work out.' The bartender continued to clean the glass, lift the glass into the light to examine, and set it down, satisfied. He looked at Chuck. "But what if it does?"

"It has," Chuck answered.

"It has," the bartender parroted, nodding. "But yet...the past." Chuck didn't know what to say. "Is she playing me? Am I being used? Am I convenient? Is she here until she finds someone better?"

"You must see a lot of that," Chuck said, looking down at the bar.

The man gave a deep laugh. "Oh, I do." He paused. "I do." He poured a glass of ginger ale and gave it to Chuck. "Drink that, it will help settle your nervous stomach."

"Why would you think that?" Chuck asked. The bartender tilted his head, an amused smile on his face. "Okay, let's say some doubt is creeping it."

"Let's," the bartender agreed.

"What do I do?"

The bartender had an amused smile on his face. "You know why I love this job?" Chuck shook his head. "No one notices me." He walked over picked up a jar, and poured some nuts into a small bowl, brought them back and put them in front of Chuck. "Almonds, good for you."

"Thank you," Chuck said, taking a bite.

"They don't see you walking the ship, and watching people," the bartender continued. "They don't see you when you look and think no one is watching."

Chuck was silent, and drawn in.

"They don't notice when the object of their desire has looked away and they look at him," the bartender said. "They don't notice the smile on their face. The real smile. Not the practice smile. The one they don't show anyone because they've been through something as well. They're guarded."

"She would notice you," Chuck said before he thought.

"Not when you're around," the bartender countered. "I've seen hundreds of people like this. When they were young they believed in the love, and fairy tales, and then real life happened."

"It destroys a lot of people's hopes," Chuck agreed.

"It does," the bartender agreed. "But, that little girl, or little boy, they still exist. They are still buried deep within, imprisoned. Now, each person tells themselves they are protecting themselves." He shook his head.

"Imprisoned," Chuck said softly.

"So when they are allowed to be safe, and show who they are..." the bartender shook his head, smiling. "It's beautiful."

"It is," Chuck said, nodding. He stood. "Thank you."

"My pleasure," the bartender said, and watched Chuck leave. "Go get her, Charles."

}o{

Sarah opened the door to her cabin, and saw Chuck sitting on the bed, working on the computer. "Hey," she said.

"Hi," he said, his whole face lighting up with a smile. "Sorry, I was trying to figure out our next target."

"Okay," Sarah said, sitting down her bag and walking over to the bed to sit next to him.

"I've been thinking, do you prefer a formal introduction to Edward or just walk up to the window and start talking to him?" Chuck asked. "Because, while we do talk, it really is no business of his who is in my house."

She couldn't stop the happy look on her face. "I was also thinking about the first meeting of Wesley and Inigo," Chuck continued. "You know, their famous exchange?"

"Who are you?"

"No one of consequence."

"I must know."

"Get used to disappointment."

"I'm familiar," Sarah told him, busy trying to 'sush' the eight year-old who had perked up.

"I'm rather excited that I won't get disappointed," Chuck said, looking at the screen he was working on, instead of her. He then lifted his head and looked her right in the eyes.

"I am going to get to know you, that is, if that's okay with you."

"I mean, it depends, doesn't it," Sarah said, an amused smile on her face. "Am I just..."

"I don't think you're ever just," Chuck cut in. She felt her breath catch. She thought the eight-year-old had just passed out on the floor. "I would love to get to know everything my wife is willing to share with me."

She straightened and tried to keep her face neutral. She used to have a smile mask.

It.

Was.Shattered.

Everywhere.

Chuck smiled at her.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"That's not a nothing smile."

She shook her head. "You really want to know everything?"

"Everything you want to tell me." He paused. "And maybe some of the things you don't think are baggage."

"Why?"

"Because they're part of you."

Sarah stared at him for a moment. "That sounds like a lot of work."

Chuck shrugged. "You're worth being a baggage handler."

The eight-year-old Sarah went completely silent.

Sarah's smile softened.

"You know," she said quietly, "I think I might actually enjoy this."

"Me getting to know you?"

"Getting to know us."

Chuck's smile grew.

"Yeah," he said. "Me too."

She reached over and took his hand.

"For the record, husband..."

"Yeah?"

"You're doing pretty well so far."

He squeezed her hand. "Good. Because I plan to keep on studying very hard."

"And," Chuck continued. "If I am not being too bold as your husband, I would very much like, when you are ready, to continue our discussion about your socks."

"But what about your socks?" Sarah asked. Chuck's eyes widened. "Can we discuss... *them*?"

"YEP!" he replied, his voice heading to an octave he didn't think he had possessed since puberty.

She leaned in, cupped the side of his face, and began to kiss him. This time...this time there was no stopping what was between them. He turned his body, and she hers, and suddenly they were pressed against each other. She pulled away and looked him right in the eye. "You sure?"

"I'm not for sure if I'm supposed to answer yes, or *As you wish*," Chuck admitted.

"That works," she said, over the joyous screams of the eight-year-old. She leaned back up, to meet him, and that's when it happened. The door slammed open. "We really need to use the lock on that door," Sarah told him.

"Damn it, too early again!" Carina said, shaking her head. "What's shaking kids?"

Carina looked at Chuck.

Then Sarah.

Then Chuck again.

"You really are in trouble."

Chuck frowned. "What?"

"You married Sarah."

"I'm aware."

Carina smiled.

"No, Chuck. You don't understand."

Sarah sighed. "Carina."

"Oh, I'm enjoying this so much."

}o{

Now

"So, you, Carina, and...Chuck," Graham said, shaking his head.

"Well," Chuck said, scratching the back of his head.

"To be fair, you didn't know," Sarah said. "Hell, I didn't realize. I wasn't paying attention to the pictures of the staff."

"I'm sorry, what is going on?" Graham asked.

"Did you know Roan was on that ship?" Sarah asked Graham.

"ROAN MONTGOMERY?" Graham asked.

"Sounds like a no," Chuck said to Sarah.

Graham was typing furiously on his computer.

“Yep, sounds like a no,” Sarah agreed.

A/N: Does anyone have a clue what’s going on? If you do please let me know.

Chapter 16: The Love Boat Ch 16

A/N: Okay, you guys know I don't plot. I have a general idea of what is to happen and then Chuck and Sarah tell me how they're going to banter. But see. I have made a classic blunder. No, not, *You fell victim to one of the classic blunders! The most famous of which is, 'never get involved in a land war in Asia,' but only slightly less well-known is this: 'Never go in against a Sicilian when death is on the line!*

No, if it had been that, I could have prepared or made a plan. The blunder I made...I said we had fifteen days on the ship and have no idea if we have fifteen days worth of content. For the record, I think we are on day five.

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

"Does he know he's married to you?" Carina asked Sarah. Sarah sat there. She knew what she should say. She knew what Agent Walker would say. Instead, she answered with her heart.

"He's aware," Sarah replied.

She felt Chuck beside her. He didn't radiate off nerves, instead...instead he radiated something else. Belonging.

"You know love gets spies killed," Carina asked.

Sarah knew it was a trap set by Carina. She knew it was, and yet she didn't even try to stop Chuck.

"Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while." Chuck replied. Carina stared at him. He sat there, as she watched him.

She was like a predator.

And of course, since he was who he was, he wasn't just thinking about a tiger, or a lion.

No, he was thinking about THE Predator.

She was watching him, finding his weaknesses.

Assessing him.

Looking for his weak points.

She just stood there.

Watching.

A smile on her face that if Chuck didn't know better would say was absolute joy, but that didn't match the description that he was told of Carina. He couldn't help it. He cleared his throat. "It's from *The Princess Bride*."

"Because that makes it better," Carina replied softly.

There was no mocking.

There was no belittling.

What there was was happiness. Carina looked at Sarah, who was staring at Chuck.

Carina saw it. She saw all of it.

Carina stared at Chuck for a moment.

"You know what the weirdest part is?"

Chuck looked at Sarah.

"That she likes me?"

Sarah rolled her eyes.

"That's not the weirdest part."

Carina smiled.

"No. The weirdest part is that Sarah looks happy."

Chuck's expression softened.

"She is."

Carina looked at Sarah.

"I've never seen you this happy."

Sarah glanced at Chuck.

“Neither have I.”

Chuck squeezed her hand.

Carina made a face.

“Okay. I preferred it when this was just a mission.”

Sarah smiled.

“No, you didn't.”

Carina sighed.

“No.”

She pointed at Chuck.

“And you're making her worse.”

Chuck blinked.

“Worse?”

“More honest.”

Sarah smiled.

“I'll take that.”

Carina shook her head.

“This is going to be a problem.”

Chuck smiled.

“Apparently I'm already good at those.”

And that's when Chuck understood.

“You are her Morgan,” Chuck said softly.

Both women looked at him. He looked from one to the other and realized he would have to explain.

“Okay, maybe you’re a chaos demon humanized,” Chuck began.

“Humanized is strong,” Sarah muttered.

“Maybe your idea of fun isn’t exactly everyone else’s,” Chuck continued.

“That’s their problem,” Carina told him.

“But you love her and want her to be happy,” Chuck finished.

“Hey!” Carina replied.

“Chuck!” Sarah said.

“Look, does she have a weird way of showing it, sure,” Chuck answered.

“She has nearly gotten me killed before,” Sarah answered.

“You’re talking about [redacted], right?” Carina asked.

“Of course I am,” Sarah replied calmly, but Chuck could tell inside she was a bundle of anger.

“That was to get you away from Winston,” Carina said. She turned to Chuck. “Trust me, Winston had a stick up his ass, and thought she could, ‘better herself.’”

“Because he wanted the best for her?” Chuck asked, but they both heard it in his voice. He was afraid Winston, in fact, did not, want what was better for herself.

“No,” Carina said. She looked at Sarah.

Sarah was looking away, and Carina smiled, seeing Sarah, run her tongue on the inside of her jaw.

Carina noticed. Carina wouldn’t miss an opportunity like that for the world, especially since 'opportunity' in this case means to fluster Sarah Walker.

“Want me to tell him?” Carina asked.

“Not really,” Sarah answered. “He-”

“Carina, don’t,” Chuck cut in. Both women looked at him. “It’s not my story to hear if she doesn’t want it told.

Sarah looked at him.

Something in her chest tightened.

Carina's teasing expression softened.

She had known Sarah for years.

She had seen her angry, hurt, furious, terrified, stubborn, reckless, and occasionally completely insane.

She had almost never seen her look safe.

She looked at Chuck.

Then at Sarah.

“Him?” she asked.

“Him,” Sarah answered.

Carina smiled.

“Oh.”

Chuck frowned.

“What?”

Carina pointed at him.

“You're really him.”

“I have no idea what that means.”

Sarah smiled.

“You will.”

Carina sat back, studying him.

“Charles Irving Bartowski, head of the Orion Institute?” Carina continued. Chuck swallowed and looked away. “The man who had created the greatest cyber security in the world?”

“That explains the black card,” Sarah muttered. “Wait,” she said, realizing what Carina was doing. “Stop. Do not tell me anything else.”

“I’m not hiding it,” Chuck said softly. “It’s just...”

“Women want you for your money, Chuckles?” Carina asked.

“Yeah,” Chuck said, nodding. “They didn’t want me, and then they did...it was because of what I am not who I am.”

“And no one wanted me because of who I am,” Sarah said softly. They looked at each other.

Carina watched them.

The woman she had spent years sharing a strange, complicated bond with, one that only Sarah and Carina truly understood, had finally found someone who didn’t need her to be anyone other than herself.

And the man beside her hadn't fallen for the spy.

He had fallen for Sarah.

Carina smiled.

“That’s it,” they heard Carina say softly, in a pleased tone.

Chuck looked at her.

“What?”

“That,” she said, pointing between them. “That's why.”

Sarah raised an eyebrow.

“Why what?”

“Why you're gone.”

Sarah's mouth twitched.

"I'm not gone."

Carina looked at Chuck.

"He's apparently got you making that face now."

"What face?"

"The one where you forget you're supposed to be terrifying."

Chuck smiled.

"She is terrifying."

Sarah looked at him.

"Good answer."

Carina groaned.

"Oh, God. You're both doing it now."

Chuck looked at Sarah.

"Doing what?"

"Whatever married people do when they've become completely unbearable."

Sarah smiled.

"I think she's jealous."

Carina gasped.

"Of you?"

"No," Sarah said.

She squeezed Chuck's hand.

"Of us."

Carina stared at them for a second.

Then she smiled.

"Maybe."

Chuck's expression softened.

"You love her."

Carina's smile faded into something warmer.

"Yeah, in my particular way."

Carina immediately pointed at Chuck.

"But if you hurt her, I will make you regret every decision you've ever made."

Chuck nodded solemnly.

"Fair."

Sarah laughed.

"You two are ridiculous."

"And you're happy," Carina replied.

Sarah looked at Chuck.

"Yes."

Carina smiled.

"Good."

"You know that meme, where there's someone behind two characters saying, 'Now, kiss,?'" Chuck asked. "It's totally her."

"She doesn't know anything about meme's," Carina told him. "But you're right."

Chuck turned to Carina. "Why me?"

For the first time since Sarah had known Carina, she was speechless.

That was when the door opened behind her, and a man walked in. Carina never turned around, almost seeming to know who it was. Chuck and Sarah however, both were

surprised...both in different ways.

"Roan?" Sarah said.

"Oh, you know the bartender?" Chuck asked Sarah. Sarah gave him a look. "He's great."

"Charles," Roan said, and handed Chuck a can of ginger ale. "In case you need it for your stomach," he said in a low tone as Roan took a seat in a nearby chair. "She hasn't told you has she?"

"No, I haven't told them," Carina said, in a mocking tone, rolling her eyes, clearly annoyed with the situation that she was no longer the main attraction in.

Roan looked over at Chuck and Sarah. He studied them a moment and an amused smile adorned his face.

He spoke, shocking everyone in the room, *"And love, true love, will follow you forever."* Sarah's eight year old perked up. "You told me you didn't think you could ever truly love someone."

Sarah reached over, and took Chuck's hand. Eight-year-old her was having a happy sigh moment. "I was wrong," Sarah said. "Very wrong."

"I am pleased to hear that," Roan replied. He looked over at Carina. "So, you didn't tell them that we have two of the men following her locked up in the brig."

"Carina!" Sarah said, her head whipping to her.

"You didn't tell them that Captain Stubing invited you along on this trip," Carina rebutted.

He looked at Sarah and Chuck, then at their joined hands.

"But I believe the important thing is that she finally has someone who sees Sarah."

Sarah glanced at Chuck.

Chuck smiled.

Roan's expression softened.

“And, Charles...”

Chuck looked at him.

“Yeah?”

Roan gave him a small nod.

“Take good care of her.”

Chuck glanced at Sarah.

“I intend to.”

Roan smiled.

“I know.”

He turned toward the door.

Then stopped.

“And for the record...”

Chuck waited.

Roan looked over his shoulder.

“She looks very happy.”

Sarah smiled.

Chuck squeezed her hand.

“So do I.”

}o{

Now

“WAIT!” Graham said, reading the file more closely. “The ship’s captain was actually Captain Stubing?!”

Graham stared at the report.

Graham removed his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose, looking as though he were actively trying to stave off an aneurysm. "Please tell me," Graham said, his voice dangerously quiet, "that there was not a cruise director named Julie. Or a bartender named Isaac. Tell me my top-tier intelligence operation did not accidentally hijack a syndicated sitcom." Sarah maintained absolute professional composure.

"Isaac makes a phenomenal mojito, sir. But Roan handled most of the bartending." Graham stared into the middle distance for a long time.

He looked at Sarah.

Then Chuck.

Then the report again.

"How many people were supposed to be involved in this operation?"

Sarah thought about it.

"Originally?"

"Yes."

"Two."

Graham nodded.

"Good."

Sarah continued.

"Then three."

His expression changed.

"Then?"

"Four."

"Four."

"Five."

Graham slowly lowered the report.

“Who is number five?”

Sarah smiled.

“You don't want to know.”

Graham closed his eyes.

“I have spent my entire career wanting to know.”

Sarah nodded.

“I know.”

He opened his eyes.

“And now?”

Sarah smiled.

“Now you regret that.”

Graham stared at her.

“Yes.”

Chuck raised a hand.

“Technically, I think you're up to six.”

Graham looked at him.

“Please stop counting.”

Graham turned away again, digging in his files, and Chuck couldn't help himself.

He sang softly, where only Sarah could hear.

Set a course for adventureYour mind on a new romanceAnd love

won't hurt anymoreIt's an open smile on a friendly shore

“Have I shown you the newest pair of socks I've bought?” Sarah asked softly.

Chuck began to cough, choking even, ending his impromptu concert.

A/N: Yeah, I added him. Why not?

Chapter 17: Ch 17, The Love Boat

A/N: Who's on first? Wait...wrong bit....

Disclaimer: I don't own Chuck

*Then [redacted] *author's note. Roan has assured me I am in fact, WAY to young to know where this is*

"Everyone, stop," Sarah said. "We need to focus on the important part." Chuck and Carina nodded in agreement, while Roan sat there, the amused smile still on his face. "Chuck asked you an important question, Carina. Why?"

The grin on Roan's face grew, but what shocked Sarah the most was Carina.

Carina looked pleased. Beyond pleased. "Because of that," she answered. "Blondie, we've been through it all. This is the first time I've ever seen you look like that at anyone. This is the first time I've ever seen you care like that about anyone, and God do you care."

"Carina is right," Roan agreed. "You care." He shook his head. "Terrible attribute for a spy."

"Why?" Chuck asked. "Why is it bad to care?" He held up his hand. "Why are you doing this job if you don't care. Why shouldn't you care about the people you are protecting. Otherwise, you're a mercenary." He turned to Carina. "And I don't believe that you don't care." He turned to Roan. "You either."

"Charles," Roan began.

"No," Chuck said, cutting him off. "You wouldn't be here if you didn't care. You obviously are on a different mission." He looked back at Carina. "When she called, you came; you didn't have to."

"You just answered your own question, Chuckles," Carina said gently. "You saw through all our bluster and bullshit, and you saw the woman."

Carina's softer expression vanished, instantly replaced by a wicked, predatory smirk as she decided to test his newfound confidence.

She leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table, her eyes raking over him.

"Of course, seeing the woman and knowing what to do with her are two very different things. She's a lethal weapon, Chuckles. Are you sure a sweet, innocent civilian has the stamina to keep up with a spy? Or do you need me to draw you a diagram?"

Sarah's eyebrows rose.

Roan's amused smile widened.

Normally, this would have been the exact moment Chuck would blush furiously, wave his hands, and babble out a string of panicked apologies.

Instead, Chuck flinched for half a second.

He took a calm sip of his drink, set it down, and met Carina's gaze with a steady look.

"I'm a computer engineer, Carina," Chuck said. "I specialize in mastering complex systems. I know how to read the code, find the hidden pathways, and keep the hardware running all night without overheating."

Carina's smirk faltered.

Chuck's smile grew just slightly.

"So no, I definitely don't need a diagram."

He paused.

"I already have full administrative privileges."

Roan practically choked on his drink, a delighted bark of laughter escaping his chest.

Carina's jaw actually dropped for a fraction of a second.

It was glorious.

Sarah felt a sudden rush of pride.

Her husband had just taken Carina's favorite game, calmly flipped it around, and beaten her at it using computer terminology.

She couldn't stop the smile.

Carina recovered, narrowing her eyes at him.

"You've been holding out on me."

"I didn't know we were competing," Chuck replied.

"We are now."

Chuck nodded solemnly.

"Okay."

Carina stared at him.

"That's it?"

"What should I say?"

"I don't know. Sentences spiraling out of control."

Chuck shrugged.

"I married Sarah. I'm getting used to women messing with me, just a skosh."

Sarah's eyes widened.

Carina looked offended.

Roan laughed again.

Sarah leaned into Chuck, resting her chin on his shoulder, and gave Carina a profoundly satisfied smile.

"He's right," she said softly.

Her hand slid down Chuck's chest and came to rest on his thigh.

"His technical support is absolutely unparalleled."

Chuck swallowed.

Sarah's smile became just a little more wicked.

“And let me tell you...”

She leaned closer to his ear.

“His typing speed isn't the only thing he has incredibly fast fingers for.”

Chuck's eyes closed.

Carina stared at them.

“Okay.”

She held up both hands.

“I officially regret asking.”

Sarah sat back, looking entirely too pleased with herself.

Chuck opened his eyes.

“I think I handled that pretty well.”

Sarah kissed his cheek.

“You did.”

She looked at Carina.

“Very well.”

Carina pointed at Chuck.

“He's trouble.”

Sarah smiled.

“He's learning.”

Chuck grinned.

“I have an excellent teacher.”

Roan shook his head.

"I believe we may have created a monster."

Sarah looked at Chuck, her smile softening.

"No."

She squeezed his hand.

"We just let him out of his cage." And added right after, "He saw all of me." She looked at Chuck. "Not to make it sound weird, but he saw the eight-year-old girl in me." Chuck didn't know what to say.

Cause it sounded a little weird.

"Nope, I'm giving you a pass on that one, Chuckles," Carina told him. "That was weird." "It was a little weird," Chuck agreed. "Damn it, it sounded good in my head," Sarah muttered.

"We know the intent," Roan said gently. "Please never say that again." "But, Agent Walker never makes that mistake," Carina pointed out. "Sarah does."

Sarah looked down at their joined hands.

"I'm too honest around him," she admitted.

Chuck turned toward her.

"You don't have to be anything around me."

Sarah looked back at him.

He wasn't teasing.

He wasn't trying to make her feel better.

He simply meant it.

"You don't have to be Agent Walker," he continued softly. "You don't have to be perfect, or careful, or have the right answer every time. You can just be Sarah, my Sarah."

Something in her expression changed.

Carina saw it.

Roan saw it.

“Chuck seemed to be the only person in the room who didn't realize he'd reached straight through all of Sarah Walker's defenses and found Sarah Bartowski waiting underneath.”

Sarah squeezed his hand.

“You make that very easy.”

He smiled.

“Good.”

She looked at him for a moment longer.

“I don't think anyone has ever made it feel safe to be Sarah.”

Chuck's smile softened.

“Well...”

He glanced down at their hands.

“I'm your Chuck.”

Sarah's eyes warmed.

“That sounds like a pretty good reason.”

Carina watched the two of them for a moment and shook her head.

“This is disgustingly sweet.”

Sarah smiled.

“You're just jealous.”

“Absolutely.”

Roan chuckled.

“Back to the topic, the mistakes make you vulnerable,” Chuck said, nodding, suddenly getting it. “Your greatest weapon...it is also your greatest strength.”

Roan nodded sagely. "But, how is that not true in everything?" Chuck asked.

"It's the stakes," Carina said gently. "It could be our lives. It's not a game."

"Well, no one is touching her or doing unspeakable things to her," Chuck said, as forcefully as he could muster.

He realized his mistake as soon as he said it.

Carina raised one eyebrow.

He turned to Sarah for help when he saw the smile on her face.

He looked over at Roan who was chuckling.

"You all know what I mean," Chuck said softly.

"Can't get it up?" Carina asked.

"He can," Sarah said. "Oh?" Roan said, enjoying the back and forth.

"We haven't done anything, because we keep getting interrupted," Sarah pointed out.

"Then how do you know?" Carina asked.

"You damn well know how," Sarah replied.

"We should stop, or he might die," Carina said.

Sarah was shocked. She had never seen Carina show restraint. She looked at Chuck, and the color that was on his face....it was indescribable.

"She doesn't seem to be complaining about anything," Carina added, trying to help. The color intensified.

Chuck cleared his throat.

"I would like to point out that I am still in the room."

Carina nodded.

"We know."

"That seems like something you should take into consideration."

"I did."

"How?"

Carina smiled.

"I decided it was more fun this way."

Chuck looked at Sarah.

"You're supposed to be helping me."

Sarah gave him an innocent smile.

"I am."

"How?"

"I haven't said anything."

Chuck stared at her.

"That is not the same thing."

Sarah leaned closer.

"I could."

His eyes widened.

"Please don't."

Carina looked at Roan.

"He's learning."

Roan nodded.

"Quickly."

Chuck sighed.

"I married into this."

"That should be studied," Roan said, truly fascinated.

“Let’s talk about the ones that are in the brig,” Sarah said, trying to redirect the conversation.

While she had no problem teasing Chuck, the others...they were not allowed.

“A beautifully put together plan, if I may say so myself,” Roan said, quite pleased with himself.

“Roan put roofies in my drink, made sure the Captain was nearby, yelled for him, got the two away from me, and in the scuffle, slipped the drugs in their pockets. Both men are under arrest for attempted sexual assault.”

“And why are you here?” Sarah asked, turning to Roan.

“My old friend Captain Stubing, and I get the humor in it,” Roan began. “Got tired of these gun runners and other criminals running the town. He was looking for someone to see if they could find anyone to help him. I had some vacation time and took it.”

“You have friends?” Carina asked.

“Have you told them what the captain suggested?” Roan countered.

“Oh, the captain is concerned for my safety and wondered if I shouldn’t stay with you two tonight,” Carina said, turning back to Chuck and Sarah, just as Chuck’s skin was beginning to turn back to a normal shade.

“No,” Sarah replied, swiftly and emphatically.

Carina blinked.

“No?”

“No.”

“You didn't even think about it.”

“I didn't need to.”

Carina looked at Chuck.

“Chuck?”

He opened his mouth.

Sarah looked at him.

He closed it.

Carina smiled.

“Smart man.”

“I was going to say that we have a perfectly good cabin.”

Carina nodded.

“Yes.”

She looked at Sarah.

“And apparently a very busy one.”

Sarah's eyes narrowed.

“Carina.”

“What?”

“Don't.”

“I didn't say anything.”

“You were about to.”

Carina looked at Chuck.

“Was she always this easy to read?”

Chuck glanced at Sarah.

“Not until recently.”

Sarah's eyebrows rose.

“Excuse me?”

Chuck immediately realized his mistake.

"I meant—"

Carina laughed.

"Oh, I like him."

Sarah smiled despite herself.

"I know."

Carina turned to Roan.

"Roomie?"

Roan's chuckle was low and thoroughly amused.

"I suspect you already know the answer."

Carina looked back at the couple.

"Fine. I'll find another room."

Sarah relaxed.

"Thank you."

Carina held up a finger.

"But if I hear anything through the wall—"

Sarah's eyes widened.

"You won't."

Chuck's face turned bright red.

Carina grinned.

"Oh, I absolutely believe you."

Roan shook his head.

"Perhaps we should leave them to their privacy."

Carina nodded.

“Probably.”

She looked at Chuck one last time.

“But for the record, Chuckles...”

He swallowed.

“Yes?”

“I'm impressed.”

Chuck blinked.

“With what?”

Carina smiled.

“Whatever you did to make Sarah this happy.”

Sarah's expression softened immediately.

Chuck looked at his wife.

“So am I.”

}o{

Chuck was watching the ocean, the moon bouncing off of it. He loved her; she loved him.

That wasn't the hard part.

Four men were after her. That wasn't even the hard part.

The hard part was: was this too much?

It wasn't just being together. He *wanted* to be with her. He was quite sure she wanted to be with him.

If they were...they were husband and wife. He looked down at the ring on his finger and smiled.

He nearly jumped as two hands slid around his waist.

“Ma'am, I'm a happily married man,” he said.

“Are you?”

He spun in her arms. There wasn't teasing on her face. “Hey, what's wrong?”

“I should be asking you that,” Sarah said.

“Well, I tried talking to the booby over there,” Chuck began.

“Booby?” Sarah asked, amusement on her face.

“Yes, that is its proper name,” Chuck replied. “I might have named it Paulie.”

“Why Paulie?” Sarah asked.

“No idea,” Chuck admitted. “I was telling him of what I was thinking, and he was less helpful than Edward.”

“It's hard to find good birds nowadays,” Sarah replied, sagely nodding her head.

“He thinks I'm talking to the wrong person,” Chuck said with a shrug.

“Carina would have said you're talking to the wrong booby,” Sarah pointed out.

He couldn't help but laugh, and loved the smile on her face. “Hey,” she said softly. “Talk to me.”

“Some would say what we're considering doing is irresponsible,” Chuck began.

“I agree,” Sarah replied, making Chuck's eyes go wide. “We probably never should have brought Carina on board. And I can't prove it, but I think she has a thing for older men.”

Chuck laughed and shook his head. “I thought you told me that other guys said you weren't funny.”

“I did,” Sarah told him.

“Sarah, no offense, but I think you dated douchebags,” Chuck said as gently as possible.

“I know I did,” Sarah told him.

She smiled at him.

“And apparently I had terrible taste.”

Chuck gave her a small smile.

“Had?”

Sarah's eyebrow went up.

“Don't push your luck, husband.”

“Yes, ma'am.”

She took his hand.

“But that's not the problem.”

Chuck's expression softened.

“No?”

“No.”

She looked down at their joined hands, then back at him.

“I think I know what the problem is.”

He started to speak, and she held up her hand. “Let me say this. I think I know what the problem is. I think there’s something that we both want to happen.”

“Not to know what Roan and Carina are doing?” Chuck offered.

Sarah laughed softly.

“No.”

Chuck thought for a second.

“Then maybe there are two somethings.”

Sarah's smile grew.

“Yes.”

She stepped a little closer.

“Two somethings we both want.”

Chuck looked into her eyes.

“And we're both pretending we're not talking about them.”

“I think we've spent enough time beating around the bush.”

He swallowed.

“That's a very dangerous thing for you to say to me.”

Sarah's smile became just a little wicked.

“I know.”

She squeezed his hand.

“And this time, I don't want to pretend.”

Chuck smiled.

“Good.”

Sarah leaned closer.

“Very good.”

He took her hands in his and held them. “I would agree, but I was told those things are supposed to be unspeakable.”

“Oh that is not fair,” Sarah said. “That is *my* line.”

“Socks to be you,” Chuck said, his lips twitching.

“That was awful,” Sarah told him.

“It was,” Chuck admitted.

“You’re a guy who makes bad puns,” Sarah told him. “That is something you should have disclosed before we married.” “So we’re divorcing?”

“I’m not,” Sarah said, holding his gaze. She watched him swallow. “Fine, I’ll say it. We probably are going way too fast, but we are where we are. I love you. I finally found you, and you want me to get an annulment?”

"I didn't say I wanted an annulment," Chuck pointed out. "Fine, it was a general you," she corrected. "These people."

"That think we're going to fast?" Chuck asked for clarification. "Correct," Sarah told him.

"And what do you want?" Chuck asked.

"To be your wife, take you down to our cabin, LOCK the door-"

"Are there any spy locks?" Chuck asked.

She blinked. "What?"

"You know, do you have any super secret locks we could put on the door?"

"Chuck...that's not a thing," Sarah told him gently.

"That's what a spy would say," he countered.

She couldn't stop the grin on her face. "I'm starting to understand why Edward judges you the way he does," she admitted.

"Oh, are you now judging me?"

"No," she said softly. "I said I was starting to understand, not that I was agreeing."

She squeezed his hands. "I could give a *Princess Bride* quote, but I'd rather just say this plainly. I spent my whole life not even knowing you existed, and wouldn't have dared dream you did because you are more than I could ever hope for. I found you. Not only did I find you, but you have done everything in your power to help me in a quite ridiculous situation, and I fall harder for you each day. So, no. I do not want an annulment, I do not want a divorce. I want to go downstairs, and consummate this marriage." "I-I like this plan," Chuck agreed, struggling with words.

She leaned in. "And, if you need some help or are struggling, I am glad to take our time and go slow."

"Jesus," he choked out.

"I should... I should probably stretch," Chuck babbled, his brain completely abandoning ship. "Hydrate. Maybe do some light calisthenics. Is there a waiver I need to sign?"

Sarah's laugh was warm, husky, and entirely genuine. The grin on her face was predatory, but her eyes were incredibly soft. "No waivers, Chuck. But I highly recommend the stretching." She trailed her fingers lightly down his chest. "Because I believe practice makes perfect, and we are going to practice until we have perfect practice."

"As you wish," he blurted out, wondering if a man could literally die from anticipation.

She stopped.

She stared at him.

"I need you to be sure."

"Oh, I'm sure!" he said as quickly as possible. "Scared, worried, some anxiety, I don't think I'm having any performance issues--"

"Chuck," she said gently.

"I'm sure."

She smiled at him and he thought he had never seen a more beautiful site in the world.

}o{

Now

"So, your husband's performance on the ship?" Graham asked, making notes.

"Perfect," Sarah said. She looked over and he was turning a certain color she loved. She looked back to Graham.

"Absolutely perfect."

Graham stopped writing.

"I meant operational performance."

Sarah looked at him.

"I know."

Chuck covered his face with one hand.

Graham stared at them.

"I am asking about the mission."

"Of course," Sarah said.

Graham waited.

Sarah smiled.

"He performed well above expectations."

Graham slowly put his pen down.

"You are doing this deliberately."

Sarah's smile grew.

"It's a perfect assessment."

Chuck looked at her.

"Performed above expectations?"

She glanced at him.

"Maybe more than above."

Graham picked up his pen again.

"I miss when reports contained useful information."

Chuck muttered, "I think that might still be useful information."

Graham looked at him.

"Please stop helping."

Graham opened his bottom desk drawer, bypassed the extra pens and the aspirin, and pulled out a bottle of scotch and a single glass. "I am the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency," Graham said to the room at large, pouring a generous measure. "I have toppled regimes. I have stared down the KGB. And yet, I am currently being forced to listen to a honeymoon review masquerading as a debriefing."

"Technically, sir," Chuck offered, "the CIA did refund the honeymoon."

Graham drank the scotch in one gulp. "If you speak again, Bartowski, I will have you dropped over international waters."

A/N: She gonna kill that boy. He's gonna go with a smile on his face.