

Whatever Happened to DeJaVu

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Timeframe: A few days before Christmas, 1987. The Stetson's marriage is common knowledge.

Note: This is for the readers who wanted another sequel the DeJaVu series; everyone else can skip over it. It won't make sense to anyone who hasn't read those stories. (It's DeJaVu, Memories and DeJaVu, and Smokescreens - all posted on Fanfiction.net in June/early July 2001.)

THANKS again to Kara for reviewing this story for me!!!

The night air was clear and cold, and a light snow dusted the fixtures and few untrodden patches of pavement between the rows of brightly decorated stores. A solitary figure stood near the edge of the plaza, contentedly watching the crowds of holiday shoppers. Lee Stetson smiled; if anyone had told him a few years ago that he would someday enjoy Christmas shopping, he would have suspected an overdose of eggnog or, perhaps, a sharp blow to the head. But now he had a home and a family - and he was relishing every aspect of this season with the excitement and wonder of a small boy.

Lee glanced at his watch and realized it was getting late; shopping had been fun, but he did have other plans for this evening. He was about to walk back up the line of store fronts in search of his wife when he felt her presence at his side. Her arm slipped comfortably through his, and her head snuggled against his shoulder for a moment before she stepped back a pace to look up at him.

"You finished your shopping pretty fast," she commented, quirked a finely sculpted brow and eyed his two large shopping bags suspiciously. "How many scarves do you have in there?"

"Not one," he responded innocently, lifting the bulging bags slightly as though doing so proved they contained no such items.

"Not one, huh?" She looked at him skeptically and then remarked with mock severity. "Try again, Scarecrow. I've known you for too long. I know there's not *one* scarf in there."

Lee's eyes twinkled and a warm chuckle emanated from deep in his throat. "You caught me. There are three, okay? Some people do appreciate a nice, warm scarf in the middle of winter, you know."

Amanda gave a resigned shake of her head. "Uh huh. And some people already have enough scarves sitting in their closets to..."

"Enough about scarves, okay?" he murmured, effectively silencing her by pressing his warm mouth against her chilled lips. "Mmmmm. You feel a little cold, Mrs. Stetson. And I can think of a few ways to heat you up that definitely don't involve scarves." He wiggled his eyebrows devilishly and bent down to whisper seductively into her ear.

Amanda grinned up at him mischievously. "Well, let's see. Mother is at a party with Captain Curt, and the boys are with Joe. I suppose I could give up my scarves for one night if you promise not to let me catch pneumonia..." She gave him a soft, tantalizing kiss and pulled away again. "Just wait here while I pick up Phillip's video game, and then we can head home. The game's on layaway, so it will only take me a minute." After one more quick kiss, she disappeared into the crowd.

When she returned ten minutes later, Lee was staring pensively at a large Christmas display. Following his gaze, she wondered whether something so innocent could have caused his apparent change in mood. He had never spoken much about the Christmases he had shared with his uncle, but she doubted that the Colonel had encouraged a belief in red-clad elves and sleighs pulled by flying reindeer. Here was one more thing she needed to get him to open up about, she realized. But not right now: she wasn't going to let him dwell on the ghosts of Christmas past tonight, when they had an entire evening and an empty house to themselves.

Slipping her arm back through his, she attempted to coax him back into a cheerful frame of mind. "I hope we haven't used up all your Christmas spirit already. I'd hate to have to get those old scarves out tonight."

Lee looked down at her and frowned. "I was just thinking about work." Inclining his head toward the display, he added, "He reminds me of one of our cases."

Amanda blinked in surprise; for some reason, that was the last response she had expected. Tilting her head to one side, she contemplated what Lee had once jokingly termed their 'own little holiday tradition - Christmas Eve trapped in a nest of killers.' Breaking that particular tradition was one of the reasons she had talked him into taking some extra time off this year, and she didn't intend to let such thoughts spoil their short vacation. "Well, you were kinda cute dressed up like Santa last year at the Titan Toys plant," she commented slowly, forcing her voice to remain light.

"And you were even cuter dressed up like Santa's helper," he returned. She noticed that, although his words were equally light, his tone and expression were grim. "But I didn't mean Santa Claus, I meant the reindeer."

Amanda looked at him blankly for several moments. "The reindeer?" she asked in a puzzled voice.

Lee pointed to the lead reindeer in the display, its red nose blinking brightly. "Operation Rudolph" he prodded, his frown deepening.

Amanda's eyes widened as she realized what Lee was referring to. "Operation Rudolph?" she managed to choke out.

He studied her silently for an interminable moment, and when he proceeded, his voice was low and gruff. "Operation Rudolph. The DeJaVu study. Come on, Amanda, don't pretend you don't remember."

Amanda stared at him in shock. Her heart seemed to stand still while Lee continued to frown at her. Thinking back, she recalled how uncomfortable she had been about participating in the the DeJaVu study - and how guilty she had felt about concealing her involvement from him, especially when he tried to question her directly. She had been relieved beyond words when he abruptly stopped asking about it. But that was a long, long time ago. He wasn't going to hold it against her now, was he? Then she noticed that his eyes had started to dance, and the corners of his mouth were quivering. She let out the breath she was holding and slapped his arm playfully. "Lee Stetson, don't scare me like that. When did you find out?"

With a hearty laugh, Lee gave up his effort to appear angry. Draping his arm around her shoulders, he pulled her close. After a brief hug, he gently ushered her

into a quiet alcove between two shops so they could speak more privately. "About a week after my last drug trial."

"But how....?" She gave him an inquiring look. "Only a few people knew..."

Lee flashed her a sultry smile "I have my ways," he intoned mysteriously. Then, noticing her worried expression and laughing again, he continued. "It was an accident, really. I was in the bullpen, headed toward Billy's office, when Gina McMasters walked right into me. She dropped all the files she was carrying."

Amanda rolled her eyes. "You used to have that effect on the Steno pool," she quipped. She knew all too well how half the women in the office used to practically throw themselves into her husband's path - and the other half got so flustered when he walked by that they practically fell over him.

Lee heaved a melodramatic sigh. "And now I'm just an old, married man," he lamented mournfully.

"Not so old but very much married, and don't you forget it," she warned ominously. "And your wife isn't sidetracked that easily, so spill it, Stetson."

Lee smiled ruefully. "There isn't much to spill. I stopped to help Gina pick the files up, and one of them was a report on the DeJaVu trials. I only got a glimpse of the summary sheet, but it was enough."

"What did you see?" Amanda couldn't imagine that a quick glance at a summary sheet would have satisfied the Scarecrow's curiosity.

"Just the basics: dates, times, initials. All of my interrogations lasted four hours except the fifth one; number 5 was only 45 minutes. And the initials beside that one were AK - Amanda King." Lee gave her a look that clearly said 'and you should be ashamed of yourself for deceiving me.'

Amanda winced slightly. "I didn't lie about it, you know. You never asked me whether I did the interrogation."

"I realized that when I started thinking about it," he admitted. "But you knew I was trying to find out the results of the study."

"I couldn't tell you. Medical studies are confidential. Mr Melrose and Dr Quorn both warned me not to tell anyone; it was a direct order." She gave him a guilty

look. "I didn't even want to do the interrogation; I tried to get out of it. Were you really mad when you found out?"

Lee shrugged, looking a little sheepish. "Yeah. For a couple of hours."

"You didn't say anything." Amanda didn't comment on how much that restraint surprised her.

"I didn't have a chance. Don't you remember? That was the week Billy sent you to New York for three days of advanced computer training." Lee paused as he thought back. "At first, I was so steamed I wanted to drive up there. But I was stuck in DC., and by the time you got back, I'd had plenty of time to cool off - and to wonder why I would have given you information in less than an hour that I wouldn't give anyone else in four hours. "

"The summary said you talked?" Amanda asked in surprise.

"No. But I know you, Amanda. You wouldn't just quit before the time limit. Not that I'm suggesting you're stubborn or anything..." Lee winked and dropped a light kiss on the tip of her nose. "Anyway, I had a couple of days to let my imagination work overtime trying to picture what might have happened during that 45 minutes." He shrugged again. "Believe me, right about then my imagination was getting pretty vivid where you were concerned. By the time you got back, I didn't think I could bring up the subject without embarrassing myself. Besides, I had some information about Operation Rudolph that I couldn't disclose to you."

Amanda shook her head in confusion. "But you told me all the details during the interrogation. Dr Quorn said I got everything."

"Everything there was at the time. A few things were added later."

Lee's words only deepened Amanda's puzzlement. "Why would they add more details? That doesn't make any sense. The study was over."

Lee grinned; he was enjoying both the memory and Amanda's reaction. "Our study was over. It turns out we weren't the only ones doing tests on DeJaVu right then. The Russians were doing some of their own."

"The Russians?" That made even less sense to Amanda. Why would the Russians be involved in Operation Rudolph? She almost giggled as she tried to picture Dr

Smythe leading a joint mission of US and Soviet agents to the North Pole to kidnap Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer from Santa's winter wonderland.

An amused Lee watched the play of emotions on his wife's expressive face. "I really shouldn't say anything, because it's still classified." He paused and glanced around to make sure they were in no danger of being overheard. "One of our agents got picked up that week by a Russian team trolling for a guinea pig, and he just happened to be one of the guys who had been in *our* drug trials. So when the Russians asked him for details of the incomplete Agency operation with the highest security clearance..."

"He didn't..." Amanda gasped.

"Yep. Operation Rudolph was supposed to be code Vermilion - and it was incomplete. So he spilled the whole thing. His partner had a team assembled to rescue him, but Billy told them to hold back until the Russians got a briefing on Operation Rudolph."

"They didn't believe it?" Amanda asked in amazement.

"They thought it was code. And with all the references to the big man in red and trekking through the snow - some hotshot decided we were planning a Russian invasion. They were on full scramble for nearly two weeks."

"Speaking of trekking through the snow," Amanda said, looking up as a flurry of large white flakes started to swirl around them, "I think we'd better hit the road. The weather guy said we were in for a big storm, and I'd rather be snowbound at home than in the Jeep halfway there."

"Snowbound at home, just the two of us." Lee grinned rakishly. "Now that's a Christmas tradition I wouldn't mind starting." Hastily rearranging his shopping bags so that he could take one of hers, he guided her quickly toward the parking lot, ready to enjoy one more delight of this magical holiday season.

The End

(Nope, sorry. I'm not going to write a "snowbound" story. Use your imagination. I'll bet it's every bit as vivid as mine.)