

Irene?

Are you there?

Yes. I'm here.

Sorry. I was driving. Not safe to keep your eyes glued to the screen while spinning around turnabouts, you know how it goes. We ticket enough people for breaking similar safety bylaws that it would feel hypocritical to do otherwise.

I've been trying to get a hold of you for weeks now.

You know how things are. Lose track of time. It's slippery. Falls between your fingers like quicksand. No clue where hours have gone. Makes you feel like you should've traded years away when you had the opportunity- at least all those squandered moments would have amounted to something, you know?

But you're alright?

Fine.

We're partners, Fletcher. You have to keep me in the loop about things like this.

It's okay if you need to take time for yourself- just let the precinct know.

We very narrowly dodged having to launch a missing person's investigation.

They should know better by now.

It's not as if the date is a surprise to anyone.

Whether they should or not is irrelevant- they don't.

They're just worried about you, Irene.

We all are.

They're overreacting.

I'm doing fine.

They aren't seeing enough evidence of that.

I know how much it chafes at you- the constant interviews, the rehashing of that night, the therapist's notes all collated in your personal file: I'm there too, Irene. I have to go through that too. I understand.

But they're only doing it because they care, Irene- both in a professional and personal capacity.

It also isn't just about us- everything that they collect helps contribute to the greater scientific understanding of the anomalous phenomena- as scientific as it can get, given the subject matter at hand.

It's something bigger than either of us. It always has been about something bigger than the both of us.

You've been a part of the team long enough to know that.

Care, right.

Is it such a cardinal sin to want to be myopic? Isn't that how humanity inherently is? Selfish?

Can't you get them off of my back, Joshua? As a favour.

Between two friends, not two assigned partners.

We've known each other for long enough now, right?

I'm doing my best, Irene. I only have so much sway at the PD.

I kept them from looking for you, but there's not much more I can do.

A lot of the processes are out of my hands. You know that.

I do. It doesn't mean that I like it.

Nor do I.

But that's the way of the world sometimes, particularly when we're dealing with the snarl of the law.

Rarely do we get what we want, or even need. But we make do.

We always do. You always do. That relentless Cavello fecklessness, huh?

Haha, maybe.

Do you need me to come pick you up?

There's no need.

I can find my own way back.

Not on foot, right?

It's no trouble, really- I'm already on my way to Sojourn Church for their evening mass.

If you need me to drive a little further out to Tilrose Lane, I can do that.

It wouldn't be any trouble at all.

Not on foot. I've picked up at least a thing or two on my years out here- I'm not stupid enough to try to travel it on foot.

Picked up a rental from a little dinky car lot not too far out of town.

Legally. It's an old clunker of a Corolla, but it'll do.

I'll have to arrange for it's pick up within the city limits tomorrow, but I can handle that. It's nothing out of the ordinary. The hot line is the same as ever. It's up on my fridge beside the staple take out menus and those ugly magnets you bought when you were in Toronto.

It's alright Joshua, really.

If you're sure.

I'm concerned, that's all. But...

I'll trust your judgement.

I am.

Go spend time with your daughter.

I'll tell her Aunt Irene says hello?

Yeah, do that.

Tell her I got her some knick knacks. Your kid goes crazy over exotic meats pre packaged into jerky, and I must've remembered that even in recent stupor fits, seeing as my passenger seat is piled up full of malt chocolate balls and other junk that she'd devour given half a chance and I'd never put into my own mouth.

The chocolate's disgusting. I don't know how she wolfs it down. Teenagers, I imagine.

And jerky just is hard to stomach, these days.

I understand. It's difficult to find palatable after you use it to barter. Difficult not to let your imagination run wild on the possible scenarios that might otherwise play out if you underestimated your portioning out, or your math is skewed, or it's not deemed of sufficient quality...

Funny how it's a staple even outside of Drydenne, to sell at rinky dink gas stations.

I'm not too fond of it myself, either. Dark chocolate is more toothsome than the milky Easter bunnies Amie tears into. It makes us good eating partners for those gift basket situations, though. Covering all of the bases.

Can I tell her that we'll be expecting you as a visitor, anytime soon?

I'm assuming you aren't going to just hurl the presents at our mailbox again.

We did have to get it rooted in a concrete block recently.

Damn teenagers insistent on mowing down civilian's mail boxes for cheap thrills.

We'll see about that. Auntie Irene might have to take a raincheck there. Nothing personal. Just work.

I will definitely mail it though, rather than lobbing it out of the window at a high speed drive by.

Give the postal office something for them to do.

Something to sink their teeth into.

They are rather short of that, these days.

I can't say that I'm fond of how they've sunken their fingers and eyes into everything.

But I suppose that's to be expected, when they're part of the library network.

It's always better than Deadwood.

Always better than Deadwood.

Thank God for Deadwood, eh?

Exactly.

Take care, Irene.

And you and yours, Joshua.