

The events in this short story serial occur during the events in the novel *Keep Her*.

Tucson, Arizona

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

Cain stood sentry to one side of the open doorway from the corridor outside Dana's flat. Though she no longer lived there, for safety reasons, her lease wouldn't be up until the end of the month. As such, they'd decided it would be a good place for Mrs. Murphy's interview with Ted Lauer, the reporter for one of the local television news stations.

At his side stood Dax Donovan, part of Dana's security. The man scanned the corridor.

"Mrs. Murphy, is there anything you'd like to say to your son in case he's watching this broadcast?" Ted's voice drifted into the hallway.

Cain glanced over his shoulder at the woman's face. His chest tightened as she looked directly into the camera with tears in her eyes. No one seeing that expression could mistake or miss the pain so obviously on display there.

"I love you, Jackson," she said. "I won't give up until you're home where you belong. I believe in you. Dana believes in you, and we're not alone." She dabbed delicately at tears that slid free. "If anyone knows anything that might help my son and catch the real killer, please contact the police."

The image of Maria's face flashed through his mind. Stark guilt had manifested there at Dana's certainly that Jackson could get the death penalty if convicted. Cain frowned. Maria had already been struggling with guilt. What would seeing Mrs. Murphy's face, hearing the pain and fear in her voice, do?

Lord, I realize Maria's done wrong by lying, but... she's so alone, and her son is dying. She's powerless to save Juan but fighting so hard to keep him. The pain of that... I can only imagine how much she's hurting. She doesn't even have You to lean on. Please, give her guidance. Somehow. Help her see what's right and have the courage to do it. The sooner, the better, so she doesn't have to carry the guilt anymore. Give her comfort as she faces Juan's death. It's coming. That's an absolute certainty. Please, work on her heart, so she doesn't have a lifetime of guilt heaped on top of the grief to come. Please!

"She's seriously ticked," Dax muttered, breaking into his thoughts.

The tight expression on Dana's face as Ted's cameraman removed her cordless microphone didn't bode well.

"Most definitely."

"Someone want to explain why I got wrangled into that interview?" She glared at Ted and Alan, then her gaze flicked to Dax and Cain.

Oh, boy.... Didn't Alan speak to her about that beforehand?

The suddenly stern set of Alan's jaw suggested the answer was no.

Ted cleared his throat. "I believe this is where I crawl off like the coward I am and leave you younger men to deal with the woman's wrath." Grinning widely, he helped the cameraman gather equipment and headed rapidly for the door.

"We'll discuss it at the house," Alan said in a tone that made even Cain's hackles rise.

***The Interview* by Dawn M Turner**

Maria Short Story #3

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Doesn't he realize that's only going to make her madder?

"No. We'll discuss it now." The mutinous expression on her face confirmed Cain's fear. Alan wasn't defusing the situation. He was making it worse. If Dana was as much like Cain's sisters as he feared, especially the spitfire youngest, Alan was about to trigger a nuclear blast.

"Dana—" Alan's voice tightened

Cain cleared his throat.

Alan scowled at him.

Shaking his head faintly, Cain gave the man a warning look.

To his credit, Alan hesitated. "Cain, Dax, please escort Mrs. Murphy out." His tone was measured and controlled with a touch of impatience. "I need to speak with Dana for a moment."

"Sure thing." Cain offered the older woman his arm. *Give him wisdom, Lord. Before that bomb goes off in his face.*

Dax stepped farther into the hall.

Cain led Mrs. Murphy out, closing the door behind them.

The grip on his arm kept him grounded, even as Cain's thoughts tried to stray to Maria.

"Do you think it'll make a difference?" Mrs. Murphy asked as they waited for the elevator.

"The interview, you mean?"

She nodded. "Do you think it'll cause someone to come forward?" Doubt flashed across her face. "I mean, if they haven't done so by now, why would my going on TV really matter?"

"I think it'll matter more than you know."

"I hope so."

Me, too. For both her sake and Maria's.

Coming next Maria #4 – *Thinking of Maria*