

Devin Lamonte bit her lip and tried desperately to rationalize what she was seeing. It was her second day as a police officer with the Sandpoint Police Department and the senior officer responsible for her training was currently viciously beating an innocent man.

Officer Gregory Handler had made it clear from the moment he met her what he thought of black people. He also made it clear that he thought even less of people like her who were half black, half white. The few times he had tired of giving her grief over her race he instead insulted her based on her good looks, telling her the only reason she had been hired was because she was attractive.

Devin wasn't a stranger to these types of comments. All through college and the police academy she had struggled to get credit when she did something great. She heard her fellow recruits saying the only reason she had graduated at the top of the class was because all of the instructors wanted to sleep with her. So while the first day of riding with Handler had been a nightmare she thought she had herself well prepared to deal with it on day number two. However, she hadn't quite understood the depth of his racism until this very moment.

They had clocked the vehicle going 31 miles per hour in a 30 zone and were planning on leaving it alone at first. But once they passed the car and Handler saw it was filled with four black men he wheeled their cruiser around and pulled them over. He ordered Devin to stay in the car "no matter what it looks like is happening".

While Handler continued to beat on the driver of the car another of the men got out and approached him. Devin secretly hoped that, unlike his friend, this man knew how to handle himself in a fight. Sadly that turned out not to be the case and Handler viciously uppercut the man, sending him tumbling backwards onto the sidewalk. The third and fourth men were out now, realizing that this was no cop to be respected. Handler's violent racism fueled rage couldn't be overcome, however, and he soon had all four men writhing in pain on the street.

And then he really got down to business.

With a population of nearly 1 million Sandpoint was usually a bustling town. Devin wished desperately for a citizen to pop up with a camera phone that could capture Handler in the act of ruthlessly beating the four men but this late at night on a weeknight the downtown street was clear. She realized that she was gripping the cruiser's radio in her hand and tried to make herself talk into it and report his horrendous transgression. She'd be "that girl", the one who had ratted out a brother cop on only her second day on the job. A tear rolled down her cheek as she released the radio and let it fall into the floorboard.

Handler had gotten serious about causing very real, lasting damage to the four men and Devin shook as she watched him. He propped one man's leg up on the curb and then jumped. He came down on it with all of his weight and a sickening *SNAP* signaled that he had accomplished his goal and broken it. Finally Devin couldn't take any more and she stepped out of the car.

"Handler! That's enough!" she yelled.

Even though she knew the words could end her short career as a police officer she was glad she had said them. Handler turned towards her slowly, a look of disbelief on his face.

"What did you say to me bitch?"

She felt herself wanting to back down. Briefly she considered running away or maybe just getting back into the car. Miraculously she was able to keep herself standing and facing her training officer.

"Please, let's just go. They've had enough," she said, her voice much less forceful this time.

Handler was about to respond when a generic looking black sedan rolled slowly past. The windows were too tinted to see who was inside but their presence was enough to spook Officer Handler. He quickly began making his way back towards the police cruiser.

"Consider yourself lucky boys. Next time you won't get off so easy when you break the law in my town," he said loudly as he walked away.

Devin stood and surveyed the tremendous amount of damage the man had done to the four innocent motorists. While it was unlikely any of them would die from their injuries all of them would require medical attention.

“Get in. Now,” Handler commanded.

For a moment she again considered running away but felt herself getting back into the passengers seat of the cruiser before she could do it. Handler pushed down hard on the accelerator and the cruiser moved quickly away from the scene of the beatdown. Devin stared out the window, hopeful that it wasn't obvious that she was crying.

“This city is full of trash like that, Officer Lamonte. If you don't have the stomach for doing what it takes to bring them to justice then I suggest you turn in your resignation right now.”

Devin just continued to stare out the window, trying to stop herself from crying. The only trash she had seen so far today was Gregory Handler and the fact that he had even dared to use the word justice in a sentence made her want to laugh out loud.

“Rookies like you think the real world operates the way your text books and your instructors tell you it does but that ain't the true way of things. Out here on the streets you have to be willing to...”

“Look out!” Devin yelled, interrupting Handler's speech.

She had glanced forward just in time to see a car stopped in the middle of the road directly in front of them. It was the black sedan from a few moments earlier and the police cruiser skidded to a stop just inches before hitting it. Handler threw his seatbelt off and jumped out of the car.

“I'm about to beat this guys ass!” he proclaimed.

Handler pulled out his night stick as he approached the stopped vehicle. Right before he reached the driver's door it flung open and a man leapt out and grabbed the approaching officer. He moved so quickly that Devin wasn't sure exactly how he had done it but he had disarmed Handler and twisted his arm around behind his back in a matter of seconds. He then turned the officer around and pressed him face first against the side of the sedan.

“Blow this freak away, Lamonte!” Handler screamed.

Devin stepped out of the car and started to pull her gun. Before she could raise it to aim the man had pulled his own gun and had it aimed directly at her head.

“Don’t,” the man said.

Unsure of what else to do Devin slowly raised her hands in the air. The man had fixed her with a cold, hard stare. His eyes were the most intense she had ever seen. He had short, black hair and a well defined jaw bone.

“Okay pal, take it easy,” she said, doing her best to sound calm.

The man released his grip on Handler’s arm but kept him pinned to the car by leaning into him. While keeping the gun trained at Devin’s head he reached into his black jacket with his other hand and pulled out what looked to be a police badge. The only difference was that this one was solid black. The man reached around Handler and held the badge up in front of his face.

“So you got a toy badge, that supposed to impress me or something?” Handler asked.

“No Officer Handler, it’s not. I just wanted you to see that I was working under the official authority and enacting my duty as a Black Badge,” the man said.

Handler tried to fight free but the man kept him pinned to the car. Realizing he wasn’t going to get out Handler eased up and spoke again.

“Okay man, I get it, you’re just doing a job or whatever, but I ain’t ever heard of a Black Badge.”

The man put the badge back into his coat before responding.

“You have now.”

After that simple statement the man moved into swift, brutal action. He set about beating Handler in a way so efficiently violent that Devin was almost impressed. Every time she sensed an opening and started to aim her gun at him he’d return his own to aim at her head. His movements were just too quick. The assault grew in ferocity and brutality and before long Handler was slumped against the car with blood running down his face. Devin couldn’t believe that all of this was happening on her second day.

All of a sudden the beating had stopped and the man placed his gun to Handler’s head. The way in which he had moved told Devin that he

intended to pull the trigger. She lowered her own weapon and aimed it at the man.

“Wait!” she yelled.

He glanced over at her.

“I know it was wrong that he assaulted those men but you can’t just execute him in the street for it!”

“That’s exactly what I can do but it’s not because of the men he just assaulted. If that was the worst thing he had ever done then I wouldn’t be here. Trust me when I tell you that he deserves exactly what he’s about to get.”

Despite her best efforts Devin’s hand started to tremble.

“Please! Don’t do this,” she pleaded.

For the first time since he had stepped out of his car she thought she sensed some hesitation in the man as he looked at her again.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Lamonte.”

“How long have you been on the job Officer Lamonte?”

“Two days. This is my second day.”

The man sighed heavily.

“You realize that if I let him live on your behalf, any future evils he commits won’t just be attributed to him, but to you as well. Are you willing to accept this?”

“Yes, of course she accepts it, just let me go!” Handler shouted.

The man slammed Handler’s head into the side of the car, then looked back at Devin.

“Okay,” she said meekly.

In a blur of violent movement the man pulled Handler to his feet and then wrenched his arm backwards until it snapped. Handler howled in pain. The man then kicked him sharply in the knee, breaking his leg. He let Handler drop to a heap in the road and swiftly got back into his car and sped away. He had done it all in a matter of just a few seconds.

Devin reached into the police cruiser and grabbed the radio.

“Dispatch this is Officer Lamonte, we just had a run in with some psycho wielding a black badge. Officer Handler is...”

“Please hold for the Captain,” the dispatcher said, interrupting Devin.

She held the radio in her hand, staring at it and trying to figure out why the Captain would be getting on the line. After a moment his deep voice boomed out.

“Lamonte, what is your location?”

“We’re on 8th street sir, between Laroux and Fairfield. Handler is injured badly.”

“Wait there for me. Do not contact anyone else, do not speak with anyone else, am I understood?”

“Handler’s hurt, sir, I was going to call for an ambulance.”

“Is he going to die?”

Devin glanced over at her training officer. He was wailing in agony as he lay in the middle of the road in a heap.

“Not right away sir,” Devin answered.

“Then do as I say and stay there and wait for me.”

It took her a few minutes but she was able to get Handler out of the middle of the street and onto the sidewalk. He was in bad shape and the limbs that the mysterious man had broken hung grotesquely limp. Handler just cried and muttered curse words while they waited.

It was less than five minutes before Captain Forsythe arrived. He was a large man and she knew that ten years ago he had likely been an imposing figure. Now he had spent too much time behind a desk and was growing soft in all the typical areas. He quickly got out of his car and approached them.

“I’m sorry sir, I wasn’t able to stop the man who did this,” Devin said.

“You did well, rookie,” Forsythe told her.

He was hovering over Handler now, looking down at him.

“He surprised me Captain,” Handler said through clenched teeth.

“I don’t think that’s what happened,” Forsythe said.

Devin cleared her throat before speaking.

“Actually sir...”

Captain Forsythe silenced her with a glare.

“Officer Handler, you sent Officer Lamonte around the corner to buy you a cup of coffee. While she was out of sight three members of the Souljas gang appeared and ambushed you. They’re the ones that did this,” Forsythe said.

Devin couldn’t believe what she was hearing but she kept her mouth closed and just nodded. Handler, on the other hand, wasn’t going to take it so well.

“What? Some guy waves a black badge in my face and breaks my arm and leg and we’re going to let him walk away? You’ve gotta be kidding me!”

Forsythe knelt down until his face was right in front of Officer Handler’s.

“If a Black Badge did this to you then you deserved it and more, Officer Handler. The only thing you should be doing right now is thanking God that he let you live.”

The Captain’s words sent a chill through Devin. She leaned against the Police cruiser, overwhelmed by the events of the past hour.

“I repeat,” the Captain said, pausing to make sure they were both listening. “Officer Handler, you sent Officer Lamonte around the corner to buy you a cup of coffee. While she was out of sight three members of the Souljas gang appeared and ambushed you. They’re the ones that did this. Is that understood?”

“Yes sir,” Devin said quickly.

After a moment Handler also muttered his agreement.

“Good. After I leave I want you to call it in Officer Lamonte,” the Captain said.

Forsythe started walking back to his car. Once there he stopped and turned back towards them.

“If either of you ever chooses to mention this incident to anyone inside or outside the department you’ll be lucky if your job is the only thing you lose over it.”



Created and Written by A.C. Hall
Episode 1 – The Subtle Arts of Murder and Persuasion

One Year Later

Devin Lamonte stepped out of her car and looked around. The streets in the area were blocked off and her fellow officers were working to keep the crime scene clear. She had parked on a side street in order to avoid the media. Before her was a small side alley that led down to the main alley.

And she knew what waited for her in the main alley.

The Sandpoint Slasher had claimed fifteen lives before she had been put on the case and six since, bringing his total kills to twenty one. If the early reports from the officer who first arrived on the scene were true then this would be victim number twenty two. She adjusted the jacket of her business suit, took a deep breath and then began walking confidently down the dark side alley.

Even though it was early in the afternoon there was a chill in the air as she worked her way down the side alley. In the distance she could see where this alley intersected with the main one. Cops, forensic specialists and other detectives were all arriving, ready to begin working the crime scene.

“Hey.”

The voice had been faint and she almost kept walking but she stopped, wondering where the voice was coming from. She had just passed an open door and she retreated a few steps and looked inside it. It opened into a large storage area of some kind and inside there was a police officer. He was leaning against the wall with his back to her.

“You okay patrolman?” Devin called out.

The man didn’t answer and she began to approach him. Most of the other cops were busy closer to the crime scene or with crowd control. He looked to be hunched over slightly and she wondered if maybe he was sick or hurt. Without realizing she had done it she had reached inside her jacket and unbuttoned her holster. Her hand rested on the handle of her gun.

“Patrolman? You alright?”

Again there was no answer. She was only a few feet away now but stopped approaching. Something didn’t feel right and she was about to go for help when she noticed a second man crouching behind the cop. The second man stood up and stepped from his hiding place behind the officer. In his hand was a pistol that he had against the cops head but it was the identity of this mystery man that had Devin so shocked.

“You!” she said.

Standing just a few feet away was a man she had hoped she would never see again. It was the mystery man with the black badge from one year ago.

“Officer Lamonte,” the man said, recognizing her.

“It’s Detective Lamonte now,” she shot back.

“That’s quite a ways to climb in one year.”

She tightened her grip on her gun but didn’t pull it yet.

“Whatever happened to our mutual acquaintance Officer Handler?” the man asked.

Devin wasn’t sure what angle this guy was playing but she answered his question.

“After our run in with you I started gathering evidence on his misdeeds. Within two months I had more than enough and he was kicked off the force and prosecuted.”

She wasn't sure but it seemed that the slightest flicker of a smile played across the man's lips.

"Good work," he said.

Devin glanced over her shoulder, hoping to see another cop passing by that could come and help her diffuse the situation. Her instincts told her to pull her weapon and order him to surrender his hostage but the threatening words of Captain Forsythe regarding the Black Badge echoed loudly in her head. But even if it meant her career she wasn't going to just stand by and let this man hurt a cop.

"Is he alive?" she asked, gesturing to the patrolman.

"Unconscious. But if you don't do exactly as I say I'm afraid I'll have no choice but to kill him."

She swallowed hard before responding.

"What do you want me to do?"

"On the shelf next to you is a transmitter. Pick it up and put it in your ear."

Without taking her hand off of her gun she picked up the transmitter. It was tiny and went into her ear easily.

"This will allow me to hear everything you say and will let me talk to you," the man said.

"Now what?" she asked.

"Now I want you to go and do your job. Investigate the crime scene and speak out loud what you're seeing. You do that and I'll disappear, leaving Officer Kelley here alive and well. But if you notify your colleagues in any way then I will end this man's life."

There was no doubt in Devin's mind that this man was telling her the absolute truth. She could see in his steel colored eyes that he wasn't the kind of person who would ever make an idle threat.

"So I just go and investigate the murder scene and then you'll leave?"

"You have my word."

Thinking of no other course of action Devin turned and walked away. Her mind was racing a mile a minute trying to make sense of the situation as she made her way out of the building and towards the main alley. Before she knew it she was at the crime scene.

“Detective Lamonte, glad you could join us,” Captain Forsythe said as she emerged from the side alley.

She was about to respond when the transmitter in her ear crackled to life.

“Can he confirm that this is a legitimate Slasher victim?”

“Have they determined if this is a Slasher victim, sir?” Devin asked.

Forsythe nodded grimly.

“The X cut across the chest matches up perfectly with his other kills. Same knife, same early morning time of death, same everything,” the Captain said.

“Describe the victim for me,” the voice in her ear commanded.

Devin briefly considered trying to silently signal the Captain about the trouble she was in but thought better of it. If the man was true to his word then all she had to do was inspect the crime scene in order to bring the situation to an end. She moved around the technicians who were milling about the area so she could clearly see the victim.

“Female, mid 30’s, average height, athletic build, shoulder length blonde hair,” Devin said.

“Who are you talking to Detective?” a nearby technician asked.

Devin smiled embarrassedly as she answered.

“Myself. Just thinking out loud.”

The technician gave her a strange look but moved along.

“Victim was stabbed several times and then the signature X across the chest was cut in,” Devin said, completing her preliminary sweep of the victim.

“Is there a tattoo on her left arm?” the voice asked.

Devin knelt down to get a closer look. The initials KM were tattooed on the woman’s arm.

“Yes, the initials KM.”

“Damn,” the voice said.

“Wait, do you know who this is?” Devin asked.

Another detective who had been walking by stopped and looked over at her.

“Did you ask me something Lamonte?”

Devin smiled and shook her head.

“No, carry on.”

She stood up and stepped away from the body, unsure of what to do while she waited for the next instructions.

“The victim had an item on her that she didn’t want found,” the voice said after a moment of silence. “Are there any dumpsters or trashcans or anything like that nearby that she might’ve used as a hiding spot once she realized she was about to die?”

Devin looked around but saw nothing other than a group of trash cans about thirty feet away.

“Just some trashcans but they’re at the other end of the alley.”

“Discreetly move over to them.”

Her level of anxiety over the situation was starting to rise.

“You said I just had to do my job and you’d let the patrolman go.”

“Investigating the crime scene is your job. Now please, discreetly move to the trash cans.”

With her level of unease growing by leaps and bounds she moved over to the trashcans. They hadn’t been seriously investigated yet since they were so far away from the victim.

“Are any of them open?” the voice asked.

“Yes, two are.”

“Look inside them for the object.”

“What object am I trying to find?” she asked.

“You’ll know it when you see it.”

After looking around to check if she was being watched Devin leaned down and peered into the first open trash can. There was nothing out of the ordinary on the surface so she reached in and moved around some of the things on the top layer. Still seeing nothing she moved on to the next can. This one wasn’t as full and after a quick examination she started to pull away. At the last moment something caught her eye and she stopped. It was hard to see in the darkness of the mostly empty trash can but there towards the bottom was a black badge. It was identical to the one she had seen the mystery man flash a year earlier.

“It’s here,” she said quietly.

The implications of what she was seeing hit her hard. Devin looked from the black badge back to the victim lying on the ground thirty feet away. Had this woman been a Black Badge like the mystery man in her ear?

“This is very important, Detective Lamonte, so I want you to listen carefully. You cannot turn that badge over to anyone at the scene.”

“You don’t really expect me to take evidence from a crime scene and hide it, do you?”

“How did your Captain react the last time you had a run in with a Black Badge? Trust me, you don’t want to complicate your life by revealing that badge. I’m not asking you to do anything illegal. Just keep it with you and turn it in to the Captain at a time when the two of you are alone back at the station. Pick it up, place it in your pocket, and keep it with you for now. I’m telling you this not only for my own good but also for yours,” the voice said.

Devin wiped the sweat from her forehead as she continued to stare down at the black badge.

“You’re serious aren’t you?” she asked.

She waited several moments for an answer but one never came.

“Are you still there?”

When there was again no answer she sprung into action. She quickly grabbed the black badge and slid it into her pocket and then took off running down the alley. She got more than a few strange looks as she ran back to the side alley and then up it towards the location of the mysterious man. When she was nearing the building where she had seen the man she pulled her weapon. She rushed through the open door with her weapon at the ready but the only person there was Patrolman Kelley. He was sitting on the floor with his back against the wall but as she approached he slowly got to his feet. He rubbed his forehead and she saw as she got nearer that his eyes were groggy and confused. She looked around the area but the mystery man was long gone.

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Devin rubbed her head as she walked back into the Sandpoint Police Station. A pounding headache had dogged her all day since her run-in with the mystery man in the alley that morning and had just gotten worse as she dealt with the circus surrounding another Sandpoint Slasher murder. Knowing that it would be the only meal she ate all day she had forced herself to leave the station for a quick lunch. She made her way up the staircase and into what they referred to as the bullpen where all of the cops had their desks and the detectives had offices. One of the officers stopped her as she went past.

“A medical courier left a package for you on your desk,” the man said.

“On my desk? They’re supposed to leave stuff like that with reception.”

“The guy tried to take it to the lab but they had him bring it up here to you instead. His forms were legit, I checked them myself.”

The whole situation was bizarre but Devin just shrugged.

“Okay. Thanks,” she said.

She made her way to her office and closed the door behind her. The walls in the offices didn’t go all the way up to the ceiling so she could still hear some of the noise from the bullpen. There was a small box on her desk with an evidence transfer form on top of it. She sat down and was reaching for it when her phone rang.

“This is Lamonte.”

“Hello Detective.”

Her headache instantly got worse as she heard the voice of the mystery man.

“What the hell do you want?” she asked.

“First I just wanted to thank you for not turning in the object you found earlier.”

“How do you know that I didn’t...”

Devin’s voice trailed off and she quickly pulled open the bottom drawer on her desk. She had left the black badge in there beneath a binder but as she pulled the binder out she saw that the badge was gone.

“It’s amazing what a two hundred dollar bribe and some well made counterfeit evidence transfer forms can get you,” the voice said. “The courier was more than happy to look through your desk for me.”

Her head was spinning as she tried to figure out just who this guy was.

“Who are you?” she finally asked.

“My name is Lance Parker.”

Devin immediately started to type his name into the database on her computer.

“Don’t bother searching for me in your database, you won’t find me there,” Lance stated.

She finished typing anyways but wasn’t surprised when the computer found no matches.

“I need your cooperation with something Detective Lamonte.”

“This time you don’t have a gun to anyone’s head Mr. Parker, so I don’t think I’ll be doing anything for you.”

“Please open the package on your desk,” Lance commanded.

After eyeing it warily for a moment Devin slowly pulled it open. Inside was a folder that contained several photos. She began flipping through them.

“What you’re seeing are photos of a bomb that I have placed underneath one of the Sandpoint Police Department cruisers.”

A cold chill ran through Devin as Lance continued to speak.

“I have no desire to detonate this bomb but I will if you make me. Now, I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking of running to the Captain and telling him about the device. He’d have no choice but to pull all of the cruisers off the streets and with no officers on patrol all hell would break loose in the city.”

Lance fell silent to allow her to process what he was telling her. After a moment he spoke again.

“Next you’re thinking of going out to the garage, either alone or with a few trusted colleagues, to search for the bomb yourself. Here’s why that won’t work. As you can see from the pictures the device is well secured and well hidden on the under chassis of the cruiser. It would take a full day and then

“As you all know we’re here to arrest Marion ‘Token’ Washington. While he has no official gang affiliations that we’ve been able to verify he has his hands in everything that happens in this part of the city,” she said.

They were set up in an empty lot on the south side of town. The group of southern neighborhoods was referred to simply as the projects and crime was a constant issue there. Normally she wouldn’t be involved in running warrants in the area but this particular criminal had been one of her first cases after she had made detective. However, she had never been able to find anything to arrest him on.

“Washington is as smart as they come. We’ve been onto him for years but he’s never slipped up, not even once, until last night. We’ve got credible intel that there are high volumes of illegal substances inside. He’s never been stupid enough to keep anything anywhere near him. This could very well be our only chance to bring him down so it’s important than none of us screw up today. Understood?”

Everyone voiced their agreement and they all began preparing for the assault. The house they were hitting was just a few blocks away and as Devin put on her bullet proof vest her adrenaline began to pump. Washington had been untouchable when she went after him the first time. Even though everyone in the whole department knew he was neck deep in all the crime that went on she had found it impossible to even begin to connect anything back to him. In fact, she had never even as much as met him. She was looking forward to remedying that.

The SWAT vehicles rolled out and she got into a patrol car with another officer and the two of them followed along at a distance. She remained in the car when they arrived at the house and watched as the SWAT team swarmed the house with perfect precision. They hit the front and back doors simultaneously and rushed inside. The sound of shouting came pouring out of the house into the morning air but it was all over rather quickly. She had been worried that Washington and his men may’ve been heavily armed but it seemed that everything had gone off without a problem.

Devin stepped out of the car and made her way into the house. There were several men lying face down on the living room floor with their hands

handcuffed behind their backs. SWAT members were leading some others out from the back bedrooms. The SWAT leader noticed her and smiled.

“Easy stuff, Detective,” he said.

“Any weapons?” she asked.

He shook his head no.

“Any drugs?”

The smile on the SWAT leaders face grew even bigger.

“We got ‘em,” he said. “One of these jokers had a big case clutched to his chest and it’s filled with all sorts of illegal substances.”

“I don’t know anything about that! He brought that case in here and I had no idea what was in it!” one of the handcuffed men yelled from the floor.

“You must be the famous Marion Washington,” Devin said, pausing to gesture to one of the SWAT members. “Get him on his feet.”

The officer pulled Washington to his feet. Devin had seen a few pictures of him but she was surprised by how different he looked in person. He looked nothing like what a man with his kind of file usually looked like. He was only slightly taller than she was and had a skinny frame. His hair was poofy and appeared to her to be almost a miniature afro. He wore square framed glasses and she could tell from his eyes that he was very intelligent.

“My name’s Token. Only my grandma calls me Marion.”

Devin chuckled.

“I know you better than you think I do Token, or Toke, as you’re also called. I worked a case on you a few months back when I was told to try and find evidence of you doing something illegal.”

“How’d that work out for you?” Toke asked arrogantly.

“Well, you’ve just been arrested with a high quantity of hard drugs in your house so I’d say it’s working out just fine.”

Devin gestured to the SWAT leader.

“Get these guys out of here.”

The SWAT team got the suspects to their feet and began escorting them out of the house. Devin watched Token go by and then turned her attention to the next man in line. He was wearing Reaper gang colors. The next suspect was wearing Soulja gang colors. How or why the two were coexisting

"She's a good cop," Lance said. "That means she's either going to be our downfall or she's going to be the one to help us crack this thing."

Token scratched his head.

"So which is it, do you think?" he asked.

"I don't know yet."

The two of them passed the time by discussing the layout of the area. They noted exits, cameras, windows and anything else that may be of strategic importance. After another hour passed a police officer approached the cell.

"Matt Rodgers?" the cop called out.

Lance got to his feet and raised his hand, pleased that his false identity had continued to fool them.

"I'm Matt Rodgers," he said.

"Time for your phone call."

The officer started to open the cell but was stopped by Devin.

"Why don't you go take a break, Jess? I'll take Mr. Rodgers here to make his phone call," she said.

"Whatever you say detective," the officer said as he handed her the cell key.

Devin stood for a moment and stared at Lance through the bars. He seemed content just to stare back at her until finally she looked down and unlocked the cell. She closed it behind him after he stepped out. Devin grabbed his arm and began leading him towards the phone. She leaned in close and hissed into his ear.

"I want you to give me one good reason why I shouldn't just walk you right into the Captain's office and tell him every single thing I know about you."

"Because we have an agreement. You don't know me, remember?"

Devin gritted her teeth as they continued to walk. She was losing her patience with his power games and found it hard to fear him when he was handcuffed inside her police station.

"I'm not so sure you have the ability to follow through on your threats," she said.

“Let me ask you something Detective Lamonte. Do you believe in the rules and regulations of this department?”

She stared at him for a moment before answering.

“Of course I do.”

“Well then, according to those rules, am I not allowed my one phone call?”

She realized that they had arrived at the phone. She still wasn't sure what she was going to do next but she could use the time he was on the phone to think it through. She released his arm and gestured towards the phone.

Lance picked it up and dialed a number, then held the receiver up to his ear.

She watched him, curious what type of lawyer he may be calling. She could imagine some high powered, high dollar legal hotshot strolling in any minute now, demanding that his client be set free. After a minute had passed she realized that Lance had never started talking.

“No answer?” she asked, letting a bit more attitude into her voice than she had intended.

Lance didn't react to her comment at all. In fact, he was standing completely motionless. Something about the situation struck her as wrong and she ripped the receiver out of his hand and put it against her ear. There was static and a series of beeps and clicks coming out of the speaker. She immediately hung up the phone and then grabbed him hard by the shoulders.

“Did you just activate the bomb?”

“I assure you Detective, I did not activate the bomb underneath the police cruiser.”

Before she could ask what he meant by that an explosion rocked the police station. It sounded like it had come from somewhere inside the building and immediately chaos began to fall over the bullpen. Before she knew what was happening Lance, who had somehow removed his handcuffs, grabbed her. He used a basic martial arts takedown to put her onto the ground and seemed to do his best to make it as painless as possible for her. As soon as she hit she pulled her gun but he had already ducked around a corner and out of sight.

“The cell's open! The cell is open!” someone screamed.

Those yells and more drowned out her own as Devin attempted to alert her colleagues that her prisoner was on the run. Smoke was pouring into the bullpen now as the sound of sirens and alarms were joined by shouting and the sound of scuffles. She got to her feet and looked around wildly, trying to determine where she was most needed. A gang member was nearby and had an officer pinned against his desk. She ran over and pointed her gun at his head.

“Get off of him and get on the floor!” she screamed. “NOW!”

The man did as commanded and several cops quickly descended on him and restrained him. Her next several minutes were spent dealing with similar situations as she and her colleagues struggled to regain order in the station. A supervisor went rushing by and told her to start helping evacuate people from the building. One of Devin’s friends, a dispatcher named Brenda, saw her and yelled out.

“Did you hear? Officer Douglas died in the blast,” Brenda said, yelling to be heard over the alarms.

“Douglas? Wasn’t he in the evidence room today?” Devin asked.

“Yeah, I overheard the Captain talking and they think that some bag from a drug seizure this morning was the explosive device. It was being stored in there.”

Devin’s heart began to race at the news. That was the bag that the SWAT team had found on Lance at the bust.

“I was a part of that seizure. That bag was filled with drugs,” Devin said.

Brenda shrugged as she turned away.

“Apparently not.”

Even though she had been told to help with the evacuation of the building Devin began frantically looking around for Lance. Deep down she had hoped that he was never really going to follow through on his threat to kill any cops but his bomb had done just that. She turned in a circle, trying to block out all of the noise and focus. She was trying to determine what the best exit would be. Using any of the regular fire exits would lead him right into rescue workers and crowds of evacuated police personnel. There was one other exit and as soon as she thought of it she began to run towards it.

The station was right in the middle of downtown Sandpoint and was connected to the building beside it by a walking bridge. When that building had been closed down the door on the far side had been locked up. No one ever went back to that part of the building anymore and now that she thought of it she remembered that the cameras in the old walking bridge weren't even operational now.

Devin picked up her pace as she sprinted through the station. It looked as if Lance had somehow opened more of the holding cells in the back side of the building and officers were struggling to round up all of the people who had taken advantage of the situation and tried to run. She was surprised when she actually spotted Lance moving quickly down the hallway ahead of her. She had figured he would've been long gone but he was only just now heading for the exit.

She decided not to announce her presence until she had a clear shot on him. She followed him as he weaved a path through the chaos unfolding in the hallways. He was faster than she was and even though she was running at top speed he was still pulling away from her. She saw him disappear around a corner in the distance. He was on the walking bridge now and she knew this was her only chance to get him.

Devin brought her gun up as she rounded the corner.

"Freeze!" she screamed.

He was halfway down the bridge already but did as she commanded. She slowly approached him, careful to keep the gun perfectly trained on the back of his head.

"It's very important that you let me leave here, Detective Lamonte," Lance said.

"Are you insane? Your stunt back there killed a man! A cop! And..." she paused as a dark realization dawned on her. "I'm as much to blame as you are because... because I didn't tell them who you were... and what you were capable of."

Her voice cracked as she struggled with the weight of what she had just said.

"Hey!" a voice yelled out behind her.

Devin spun around to face the new person and saw Token standing there with his hands raised in the air. She knew right away that his only goal had been to distract her. She whirled back towards Lance but before she could even turn all the way back he was upon her. He grabbed the gun in her hand and yanked it hard. She tried to punch him in the face with her free hand but he easily blocked it and then yanked again. This time the gun came free and in an instant he had it pointed at her head.

“What now cop killer? Are you going to add me to your body count?”

Devin asked angrily.

“The cop that died in the evidence room was dirty,” Lance said.

“Bullshit. You’re lying.”

A look of intensity unlike anything Devin had ever seen came over Lance as he responded.

“I never lie about dirty cops.”

After a long pause he continued speaking.

“Three years ago Officer Douglas shot and killed a college kid.”

“I remember reading about that. That kid had a laser tag gun and it was dark. It was a mistake that could’ve happened to any cop!” Devin said.

“That kid was a twenty year old frat boy who Douglas caught in bed with his fifteen year old daughter earlier that night. He chased him out of the house and into the park where he shot him.”

Devin laughed.

“You couldn’t possibly have proof of that.”

“Receipt from a nearby twenty four hour department store for a laser tag set, paid for by Douglas’s credit card, thirty minutes after what the coroner ended up determining was the time of death. He planted the gun on the kid and then called it in.”

When Devin didn’t respond Lance spoke again.

“Or how about Lindsay Evans? Up until five months ago she was a waitress at Hangman’s Pub on the edge of downtown. Late one night Douglas is in there, angry and drunk. When last call comes he refuses to leave. She puts her hand on him and asks again and he grabs her and slams

her face down on the bar as hard as he could, killing her instantly. Douglas paid the owner ten thousand dollars to keep it quiet.”

“How could you possibly know that?” Devin asked.

“It’s my job to know things just like that. Douglas and the owner thought they had deleted the files off the surveillance camera system but few people know how to truly delete files,” he said, pausing to let his words sink in.

“He was dirty, Devin.”

Devin shook her head.

“I still don’t believe you. And even if he was dirty what right do you have to act as his executioner?”

“That’s a debate for another time.”

Lance looked past her at Token who was watching for any signs of trouble around the corner.

“Go back to the cell Toke,” he said.

“No way man. Once she tells them I helped you escape, I’m screwed.”

“She’s not going to tell them,” Lance assured him.

Devin laughed bitterly.

“Like hell I’m not.”

“See?” Token said, pointing at her.

“No. You’re not. Once all the commotion dies down you’re going to go back to your office. I left you all the proof you need to know that Douglas was every bit as dirty as I say he was,” Lance said.

Again he looked at Toke.

“Get back before it’s too late and they know you’re missing. They knew the bag of drugs belonged to me, they can’t pin that on you. And with it gone and me escaped they won’t have anything they can hold you on.”

“You sure?” Token asked.

Lance nodded and Toke took off back towards the holding cell. Once he was gone Lance began backing towards the door into the empty building. He kept the gun pointed at Devin as he moved and she glared at him angrily. Once he reached the door he kicked it hard and it swung open.

“There’s more going on here than you know, Detective,” he said.

and gripped the top of the wooden privacy fence. She pulled herself up and over and dropped silently into the backyard. The only light was coming from a window by the back door and she slowly crept forward.

The house was bigger than any others in the projects. She wondered how it was that Token pulled it off without getting robbed or gunned down by jealous thugs. She had talked to countless people in the area during her investigation of him but never found even one person who would talk bad about him. She had always assumed it was because they feared him.

She reached the steps leading up to the back porch and had just moved up onto the first one when she sensed movement somewhere in the backyard. Before she could react she heard a shotgun cocking and a big man wearing all black came stepping out of the shadows from the nearby corner of the yard. Devin felt like a fool as she raised her hands and surrendered her gun to him. He took it and then motioned for her to go inside the house.

Devin swallowed hard as she pushed the back door open and stepped inside. It opened into a spacious kitchen. Token was seated at a large kitchen table along with a young gang member from the Souljas. There were hundreds of silver containers stacked on the table.

“Good evening Detective, welcome to my home,” Token said.

She had no idea what to do next so she stood there silently. The man from the back yard stepped around her and gave her gun to Toke. He then returned to the back yard. The young gang member was gathering up the containers and packing them into large sacks.

“I deliver these over by the elementary school, right?” the young man asked.

“Yeah. Be sure to pack in a few extras, they went fast yesterday,” Token said.

Devin was staring at the packages skeptically, wondering what type of drugs they contained. Token noticed her staring and leaned back in his chair and smiled.

“Trying to figure out what product I’m pushing this week?”

Token gestured to the young gang member.

“Give her one.”

The young man picked up one of them and walked towards her with it. He stopped a few feet away and stretched out his arm, trying to give it to her without getting too close. She slowly took it from him and he immediately recoiled a few steps.

“Open it up,” Toke said. “Hell, have some if you want. One taste and you just might be hooked for life.”

She looked from the container to him and then back to the container. He was watching her intently so she pulled the lid off and looked inside. It was lasagna. She looked up at Token. He had a sour expression on his face.

“A lot of folks in the projects are struggling to make ends meet. A lot of them have kids and those kids often go days at a time without anything to eat. So I do what I can to help out,” he said.

Even though she knew he was a criminal she felt terrible for her assumption and wondered how else she may’ve been wrong about the man. She was glad when he finally looked away from her.

“Go and get some of the guys and have them help you load all of this up,” Token told the young gang member.

The young man disappeared into another room and Toke turned back to Devin. He smiled as he watched her.

“You know, Lance swore you were going to show up here tonight. I wasn’t so sure but I guess I should know better than to doubt him.”

“Where is he?” Devin asked.

Token stood up and led her through a nearby door. It opened into the living room and Devin couldn’t believe what she saw there. The room was covered with monitors and screens. Each of them was showing a feed from one of the many different security cameras inside the police station.

“How did you...”

“During the chaos of the explosion I piggybacked into all the systems at the station,” Lance said from across the room.

Devin hadn’t even noticed he was there at first. He was sitting at a massive desk with a bank of monitors in front of him. They all seemed to be displaying personnel files of cops.

“Come over here, Detective, I could really use your help,” Lance said.

“What makes you think I would ever help you again?”

Lance stood up and slowly approached. That intense look was back on his face.

“Because the Sandpoint Slasher is a cop. And you’re going to help us catch him.”

END OF EPISODE ONE

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