

Previously on Black Badge: Devin struggled to deal with the information that she believed proved that Lance Parker was actually Edison Ellis, a teenager who had killed a cop 17 years ago and then had been presumed dead. She joined Lance outside of Officer Harriet Jeter's apartment and the two of them went inside to confront the Slasher suspect who had displayed erratic behavior over the course of the night. They discovered that Jeter was an unbalanced woman who had been sabotaging kidnapping and runaway cases so that parents couldn't recover their children. Devin wanted to get the woman help but Lance wasted no time in executing Jeter. This pushed Devin over the edge and she shot at Lance and threatened to kill him the next time she saw him. Lance left to go after the final Sandpoint Slasher suspect and Devin went to Leo's house seeking comfort. However, when she

arrived she found him dead, the latest victim of the Sandpoint Slasher.

Lance sat at the desk, typing away furiously at his computer in the house they were using as their new headquarters. It was the middle of the night but he was wide awake as he searched through the personnel files of Sandpoint Police Officer Dylan Kenwright, the man they now knew was the Sandpoint Slasher. The door opened and Lance turned around to see Token coming inside. He was flanked by two gang members.

“Kenwright’s not at his house,” Toke announced. “Any luck getting a hold of Leo?”

Lance shook his head.

“No, he’s still not answering his phone. We need to know what intel he’s gathered on this guy. He might know something that could lead us right to him.”

Toke approached him.

“Why not call Devin? She probably knows where he is.”

Lance hadn’t told Token about the unpleasant incident that had happened between he and Devin just an hour ago. He shook his head and turned back to his computer.

“No, leave her out of this.”

Someone knocked lightly on the front door and Lance, Toke and the two gang members all pulled their guns. They had only told a small group of people about their new location. Lance moved across the living room

to get a better angle on the door and then signaled for Token to open it. He pulled it open quickly and they saw Devin standing there.

“Take her gun,” Lance said.

One of the gang members stepped forward to follow the order but Token stopped him.

“Hold on a second. Why do you need to do that?” Toke asked.

“Because she made a rather ominous promise to kill me the next time she saw me.”

Token wasn't sure how to respond to the statement. It sounded like a joke but he could tell that Lance was deadly serious about it.

Devin pulled her jacket open, revealing her gun in its shoulder holster. The gang member looked to Token for orders and after a moment Toke nodded. The man removed her

gun and waved her into the house. She slowly shuffled in and they locked the door behind her.

Lance was staring at her sharply, waiting for her to say or do something. He continued like that for over a minute but she didn't budge. The color was drained from her face and she looked like she was in shock. Finally Token approached her and put his hand on her shoulder.

“Devin? What’s wrong?”

She looked down at the floor.

“It’s Leo,” she said, barely above a whisper.

A long moment of silence held in the room as everyone waited to hear the rest of her statement. Finally she looked up, her eyes filled with tears.

“He’s been killed by the Slasher.”

Token took a step back.

“What?”

“Are you sure about this?” Lance asked.

“I was in his house. I saw the body,” she muttered.

Devin bit her lip to keep from crying but it only worked for a second. Before long she was weeping heavily as she pictured Leo’s body lying there on the coffee table, cut open by the Slasher. Her knees gave out and she started to collapse. Token reached out and caught her and pulled her close as she continued to sob.

Lance quietly walked back to his computer. He placed his hands on the back of his computer chair and left them there for a moment. He then picked it up and flung it as hard as he could into the big screen television

hanging from the wall. The screen cracked and sparked.

“Son of a bitch!” Lance yelled.

He began pacing quickly.

“Leo was the one that outed him on television as a cop, of course the Slasher would want revenge for that!” he fumed. “I should’ve seen this coming.”

“We all should’ve,” Token responded.

Lance balled his hands into fists and looked around for something to hit. He was on the verge of losing it, of letting the anger overwhelm him and take control. He stood like that for several moments, contemplating destroying his computer, the house, anything. Finally, through gritted teeth, he forced the anger down deeper into himself. He felt as if it was burning him up from the inside but he

channeled that feeling into the idea of a single word; vengeance.

Lance stalked across the living room towards Token and Devin.

“Stop crying,” he said angrily.

Devin ignored him and continued to weep. Lance reached out and grabbed her good arm. Toke gave him a dirty look.

“I said stop it!” Lance yelled.

“Dude, enough!” Token shouted.

Lance ignored him and pulled Devin’s arm, forcing her to separate from Token and look at him. Her eyes were puffy and red and she stared at him with an expression of pure hatred.

“Do you want to cry all night or do you want to go and get the bastard that did this?” Lance asked her.

She stopped crying.

“I want to take him down.”

Lance pointed at the gang member who had taken her gun.

“Give her gun back.”

The man walked over and handed it back to her. Lance turned towards Token.

“Toke, I want you to get as many guys as you can out on the streets. Get them all Kenwright’s picture and have them call me if they see him. You stay here and monitor the police radio, the police network, the news stations, monitor everything,” he said. “And keep digging through Kenwright’s files and information. Maybe there's something in there we've overlooked.”

Token nodded.

“What are you going to do?” he asked.

“Devin and I are going to Leo's house to search for clues.”

She looked up at him fearfully.

“No, I can't go back there.”

“You can and you will, Devin. If there's any chance that we can find something there that will tell us where the Slasher is going next then we have to do this. No matter how unpleasant it will be.”

She took a step away from him and held up her free arm.

“I'm not going.”

Lance rushed her, stopping right in her face.

“Yes you are. If we can't use this to bring down the Slasher then Leo died in vain. I know it's hard for you but if there's something in that house that can help us then

you owe it to Leo to go back there and find it.”

She stared at him for a long moment before nodding.

“Okay,” she said.

“Good. Everyone knows what they need to be doing so let’s get to it,” Lance said as he and Devin headed for the door.



Created and Written by A.C. Hall
Episode 12 – Things Fall Apart

The first few minutes of their drive were completely silent. Devin stared out the

passenger window as Lance took them towards Leo's house. Finally she turned towards him and spoke.

“What do you know about Edison Ellis?”

Lance didn't take his eyes off the road but she saw a slight twitch in him when she uttered the name. He reached up and rubbed his arm. It appeared to be a subconscious movement and after a moment of watching him do it a memory returned to the forefront of Devin's mind. After Lance had been injured fleeing from Officer Shanley she had seen that he had a tattoo on his arm. It was of the initials E.E., which she now had no doubt referred to his real name, Edison Ellis. She felt foolish for not remembering the tattoo sooner.

After a long moment Lance responded.

“It’s a name.”

“It’s your name,” she shot back quickly.

Lance paused before responding.

“It’s A name, but it’s certainly not my name.”

His response brought all of her anger towards him boiling to the surface. She could feel her cheeks turning red as she stared at him.

“So that’s it? That’s your answer? That it’s a name?”

He stared straight ahead, his jaw clenched tightly shut. She wasn’t about to let him shut down now and she kicked the dash board as hard as she could.

“One time, you son of a bitch, one time!” she yelled. “I want you to look me in the eyes and tell me a single truthful answer. After all

of your bullshit and all of your lies, I want you to tell me this one truthful thing. You owe me that much. So what do you know about Edison Ellis?”

He was clenching the steering wheel tightly with both hands. Finally he turned to look at her. She thought she had grown accustomed to his intense stares but this one was different and she almost wished she hadn't pushed him far enough to look at her like that.

“It's a name. Just like Russell Preston is a name. Matt Rodgers, Landry Taylor, Kyle Saracen, Derrick Bryant, Ephram Davis, Marcus Grayson,” he paused for a long time before quietly adding. “Lance Parker.”

He returned his eyes to the road before continuing.

“They're all just names, Devin.”

Devin laughed. It was a mean, spiteful laugh.

“So what, you've just been a cop killer all your life, is that it? Is that how you've always gotten your fun, Edison? By killing cops?”

“Stop calling me that.”

Devin reached into her coat pocket and pulled out the picture of the young Edison Ellis. She held it up in front of his face.

“What? Stop calling you this?”

He glanced at it for a second then quickly looked away.

“Trust me when I tell you that I don't know the first thing about that kid,” he said.

She laughed again. She pulled the picture back and stared at it.

“You're a liar. He's a cop killer, just like you're a cop killer. You've been at it your

whole life, first as young Edison Ellis and now as Lance Parker.”

He was trying to hold himself in check but was growing angrier as she spoke.

“Well thankfully Devin, I don't give a shit what you think about me. As you may've noticed I don't exactly lead a normal life. I don't have the luxury of caring enough about any one person that their thoughts on who I am matter one damn bit to me.”

She smiled as she continued to stare at the photograph of young Edison Ellis.

“Just the perfect, emotionless killing machine, huh?”

Lance stopped the car.

“We're here. Focus and let's find something that can lead us to Kenwright,” he said.

Devin looked up and saw that they were now outside Leo's house. A shiver ran through her as she looked at it. She wished they hadn't gotten there so quickly. She moved her hand to the car door but didn't pull it open. Lance was already out of the car and saw her hesitating. He walked around to her door and pulled it open.

"Let's go," he ordered.

She begrudgingly got to her feet and followed him up to the front door. Lance paused and pulled on a pair of gloves. He cringed as the glove dug into his hand that had been stabbed by Harriet Jeter. He then opened the door and stepped inside.

Devin stopped in the doorway. She watched as Lance went into the living room and flipped on the light but she didn't follow him.

She couldn't follow him. The idea of seeing Leo's dead body again, sprawled out on the coffee table, it was too much for her. She turned around and was about to go back out onto the porch when she felt a hand on her shoulder.

“Come inside and close the door,” Lance said.

She closed it but didn't turn around to face him.

“Now get a grip and do your damn job.”

His words pissed her off and she turned around and moved past him. She used her anger as motivation and started searching the house for clues. She avoided the living room, knowing that one look at Leo's body would bring her crashing back down again. She tried not to think about it but every few

seconds the memory flashed into her mind. Leo laying there, the giant X savagely carved into his chest.

The two of them worked through the house, trying to find anything that the Slasher may've left behind. Thirty minutes later they had come up with nothing. Devin returned to the entryway, hopeful that they would be leaving now.

“Devin, come take a look at this,” Lance said from the small office at the end of the hall.

She walked into the room and saw that he was examining a large book case full of journals.

“Leo kept meticulous journals about his work. Even though he wasn't a detective yet

he thought like one. He took notes on everything,” Devin said.

Lance started pulling them out one by one and flipping through them.

“”Did he have one on our investigation into the Sandpoint Slasher?” he asked.

“Sort of.”

He turned to look at her.

“What do you mean sort of?”

Devin was too exhausted to care how he was going to react to what she was about to tell him. Her knee was killing her, her shoulder was aching and every few seconds she saw a vivid picture in her mind of the butchered body of the man she had been falling in love with. Keeping Lance from getting upset didn't even register as a worry at this point.

“He wasn't just looking into the Slasher. He was looking into you and the Black Badges.”

Lance clenched his jaw and it looked as if he was going to say something. He stopped and just stared at her for a moment before turning back to the shelf and continuing looking through the journals.

“Would it have contained information about all of us?” he asked.

“Yes, most definitely.”

“Help me look for it.”

She did as he asked and started helping him search for the journal. It took them several minutes to work through the entire book case but neither of them found it.

“Did you see a journal anywhere in the house when we were searching?” Lance asked.

Devin shook her head.

“Me neither. Would Leo have kept it somewhere else?” he asked.

Again she shook her head.

“No, he kept them here and worked on them at night.”

Lance sighed and looked around the room.

“Kenwright must’ve taken it,” he said.

A thought occurred to Lance and he strode towards Devin swiftly.

“Did Leo know the location of the new house we’ve been using?” he asked.

“Yeah, I told him the other day.”

“Damnit!” Lance yelled.

He pulled out his cell phone and started dialing a number.

“What’s wrong?” Devin asked.

“What's the one thing we know about why the Slasher will change what victims he goes after?”

“He does it when he thinks someone is on to him.”

“Exactly. He did it with the first Black Badge in the alley, he did it with Leo, and now he's going to do it with us.”

No one answered his call and he quickly dialed the number again.

“Kenwright came here to pay Leo back for outing him as a cop and stumbled upon the journal that laid out our entire investigation. You know he's going to be coming after us now.”

Token answered this time.

“Token! Listen to me!” Lance yelled into the phone.

“Hold on a second Lance, we just heard someone outside,” Toke said.

“No! Token, get out of there!”

Toke had already set down the phone. After a moment Lance could hear shouting and then gunfire.

“The Slasher is at the house,” Lance said gravely.

He sprinted for the front door and Devin followed as fast as she could. Her knee was in bad shape after she had been on it all day and now well into the morning hours and pain shot through her with each step. As she passed the living room she forced herself to keep her eyes forward, not wanting to see Leo.

Lance was already in the car with it started and she limped to it as fast as she could. She

collapsed into the passenger's seat and he slammed on the gas before she even had a chance to close her door. He kept the accelerator pushed all the way into the floor for most of the drive. Devin's eyes darted from the speedometer as it topped 100 mph to the road as Lance time and again narrowly avoided crashing. It took them just minutes to get back to the house and he slammed on the brakes hard. As the car came sliding to a stop they saw a dark blue sedan parked in the driveway. There were also three gang members dead in the yard.

Lance leapt out of the car before it had even come to a complete stop. He pulled his gun as he sprinted up to the front door. He lowered his shoulder and smashed through it. Officer Dylan Kenwright was there, hovering

over Token on the other side of the room. Toke appeared to be unconscious and was lying on the couch. Kenwright had a knife in one hand and it appeared that he had just now made his first cut on Token. In Kenwright's other hand was his pistol and he opened fire on Lance immediately.

Lance dove backwards onto the front porch. He saw bullets strike the door frame just as he fell back through the doorway. As soon as he landed on his back on the porch he rolled. More bullets struck right where he had just been lying. His right hand was hurting badly from the stab wound and he had to shift his gun to his left as he got to his feet. Devin had taken up a position on the other side of the door and watched Lance for a signal. He poked his head around the edge and saw

Kenwright going out the back door. He had Token draped over his shoulder and was carrying him.

“He’s going out the back!” Lance yelled as he rushed into the house.

He sprinted to the back door but as soon as he emerged into the backyard Kenwright opened fire on him. The man had moved around to the side of the house and then turned and waited. Lance knew that if he tried to stop he was dead so he did the opposite. He bounded forward out into the backyard, running as fast as he could.

Kenwright fired again and then a third time, the shots narrowly missing. Lance dove into a roll as Kenwright fired twice more.

Lance slid to a stop on the grass and saw that Kenwright was gone. He heard gunfire

coming from around front. He got to his feet and moved to the side of the house and peeked around the corner. Kenwright was by his car and was exchanging gunfire with Devin. Lance aimed his gun and fired as well. The Slasher ducked around behind his car. He had popped the trunk and he tossed Token in and then closed it.

Kenwright fired at Lance, then at Devin, as he moved from the back of his car to the driver's door. He was incredibly accurate and every time Lance started to advance he had to fall back as the Slasher's bullets struck the house just inches from him. Kenwright got into the car and started it. Lance knew that Toke's chances of living weren't great if they didn't end this right now. He took a deep

breath and then sprinted around the corner and towards the car.

He aimed straight ahead and fired into the car, trying to hit Kenwright through the windshield. The man ducked down as he reversed his car out into the street. Devin had also emerged from cover and was emptying her clip into the car in a last ditch effort to rescue Token. The driver's window shattered, as did the back windshield but none of their bullets struck the driver. Kenwright put the car in gear and peeled out, taking off down the street

Lance and Devin ran back to his car and got in.

“He turned right at the second street!” Devin said as they took off in pursuit.

Lance made the same turn just in time to see Kenwright make another turn in the distance. He accelerated and skidded around the same corner. They could see the car ahead of them and Lance kept his foot on the gas, getting them closer. He followed as Kenwright took another turn and then another.

“Was Token dead?” Devin asked.

“No, we interrupted Kenwright before he could finish the job.”

“How can you be sure?”

“Because if Token was dead then Kenwright would’ve just left the body.”

They were out on a main road now and despite the very early hour there were a few cars out. Kenwright pulled alongside one and then rammed it, sending it spinning out of control. Lance pulled hard on the steering

wheel, barely swerving around the car as it came spinning back towards them.

“That’s enough of that,” Lance said through gritted teeth.

He slammed down on the gas pedal. They were slowly gaining on the Slasher. Lance kept the car steady and followed every move that Kenwright made. After a few minutes they were right on his bumper.

Kenwright turned sharply to the right and Lance followed. They jumped a curb into one of the largest parks in the city. The Slasher maneuvered his car through groups of trees and Lance mimicked the moves, branches slapping at the car as they sped past. They followed him back onto the main walking path of the park, both cars accelerating above 50 mph. Devin craned her neck behind them,

just now recognizing which part of the park they were in.

“Stairs!” she yelled.

Her warning came right as they saw Kenwright’s sedan go flying into the air. There was a huge set of stairs that lead down to a large fountain and the Slasher’s car was sailing over them. She had expected Lance to hit the brakes but instead he pushed down harder on the gas. They flew out into the air as the stairs descended below them. Ahead they saw Kenwright slam into the ground, his car careening awkwardly to the left after it hit.

Devin felt sick as their car pitched forward. The ground loomed large below them and soon they were smashing into it hard. The impact activated the air bag and jolted the two

of them violently. Devin's head cracked the window as she was jerked to the side and slammed into it. Lance fought to regain control of the car as it weaved wildly. He tried to push the air bag down so that he could see but just as he did they crashed into the wall surrounding the large fountain.

After the momentary shock of the impact wore off he tried to start the car. White smoke was pouring from under the hood and no matter how hard he turned the key nothing happened. Lance threw open his door and stepped out, his gun drawn. Kenwright's car was smashed pretty good but was still running and it jumped another curb back out onto a city street. Lance sprinted after it. As he emerged in the road he saw it turning onto a side street a block away.

Headlights washed over him and Lance turned around to see a truck approaching. He lifted his gun and fired it into the air.

“Get out of the vehicle now!” he yelled.

The truck came to a stop and Lance ran towards it. He pulled the door open. An older man was inside and held his hands up in the air.

“I hate this city,” the man mumbled as he climbed out of his truck.

Devin came limping towards them just as Lance was getting in. She moved around to the other side and climbed into the passenger seat. Blood was running down her face from where she had hit the window.

“Where’d they go?” she asked.

“I’m not sure.”

Lance took the same turn he had seen Kenwright take but after that there was no sign of him. They were deep downtown now and they drove slowly, each of them carefully looking around for any trace of the blue sedan. After several minutes Devin slumped in her seat.

“He’s long gone by now,” she said.

“No, he’s never been interrupted before. The most important thing to him right now is to find a nice quiet place to finish his work on Token.”

His words may’ve made sense but Devin felt as if she was coming unhinged. She was in so much pain that it felt like her body was on fire. She had risked everything following Lance on this investigation and now they had lost the Slasher. Catching him and bringing

him to justice had always been like an excuse in her mind. She may've broken the rules, broken the law, disappointed herself, lied and cheated, and even lost Leo, but at least in the end they were going to bring down a serial killer. It didn't make it okay but it helped, it brought a little balance to the equation to think of something good coming from all the bad they had done. Devin couldn't handle the idea of that final victory being gone and yet as she looked around she still saw no sign of the Slasher's car.

She sat up and turned towards Lance. She grew furious as she watched the calm way in which he observed the streets around them for the car.

“Do you see what happens all around you? To everyone who placed their trust in you?”

she asked angrily. “Just more casualties in Lance’s war. They’re all acceptable losses, right? Just necessary collateral damage?”

He turned to look at her, his eyes burning with anger.

“You're not completely blameless in all of this,” he said. “You want to play righteous and say I used you, I made you do things, I turned you into something dark and wrong? Well I didn't have a gun to your head the entire time, Devin. You made decisions, you helped out, you chose to be a part of this whether you want to admit that to yourself or not!”

He paused for a moment as he craned his neck to look down a street. After they passed it he returned his angry gaze to her and continued.

“And if you hadn't pulled Leo off of his duty to look into Kenwright and told him to investigate me instead then maybe he would've found something sooner and he'd still be alive.”

“How dare you! You arrogant son of a...”

Lance slammed on the brakes, interrupting her.

“There’s the car,” he said, pointing.

Devin looked and saw the battered blue sedan. It was parked outside a large, dilapidated building. It was ten stories tall and completely dark except for a light on the top floor.

“They’re inside,” Lance stated.

He put the truck into park.

“Call the station. Get them to put the captain on the line right away,” he said.

Devin pulled out her cell phone and dialed the station. She put it on speaker phone as it rang.

“This is Detective Devin Lamonte. I need to speak to the Captain this second.”

“The Captain isn’t available right...”

“Tell him it involves the Black Badge and the identity of the Sandpoint Slasher,” Devin interrupted.

The woman was silent for a few seconds before responding.

“One moment, I’m connecting you to him.”

It took just a moment before Captain Forsythe’s voice boomed out from the phone.

“Devin? What the hell is going on?”

“Sir, I’m here with the Black Badge that has been operating in our city over the past several weeks. We uncovered the identity of

the Sandpoint Slasher and it turns out that Leo Banks was right. The Slasher is Officer Dylan Kenwright. We've tracked him to an abandoned building at 7119 Allencrest. He's inside about to kill someone."

The Captain was silent for a moment.

"Are you certain about this?"

Lance leaned towards the phone and spoke.

"There's no time for second guessing, Captain," he said. "Send everything you have to this address. Send it now."

Lance didn't wait for a response. He jumped out of the truck and Devin did the same. Her body was in agony but she pushed herself to follow Lance into the building. Her heart sank as they entered into the rundown lobby area. The elevator was long since out of service and the only way up was the stairs.

She felt like she could barely take another step and she felt completely and totally defeated as she looked up the staircase.

After pausing for just a second to glance back at Devin, Lance began climbing the stairs. He ran like a man possessed, taking two at a time as he sprinted upwards as fast as he possibly could. He reached the second floor, then the third. He was breathing hard and the muscles in his legs were burning but he shut it out and focused on one step at a time.

The fourth, fifth and sixth floors went past in a blur but he could feel himself slowing. Sweat was pouring out of him as he struggled up to the seventh and then the eighth floor. His legs were on fire and he wanted badly to stop for just a moment but he quickly shut the

idea out of his mind. The Sandpoint Slasher was just two floors away from him now. Lance thought of this and only this as he bounded up the remaining stairs to the tenth floor.

He emerged onto the top floor and quickly took in the scene. The entire tenth story was an open loft. It was mostly empty except for a few pieces of broken down dust covered furniture. In the middle of the room there was an old table. Token was tied to it. His shirt was off and Kenwright was there, his knife stabbed into Toke's chest cutting the beginning of the signature X into him. Just as he had back at the house Kenwright also held his gun and had it pointed right at Lance.

“You really should work on your stealth skills. I could hear you coming from a mile away,” Kenwright said.

Lance had his own gun in his hand and stepped slowly into the room, watching the Slasher closely. The man’s dark black hair was matted with sweat and he watched Lance with an expression of amusement. Blood was running down Toke’s side and onto the table. Lance observed closely and felt a wave of relief come over him when he saw Token take a breath.

“Lance Parker, I’m assuming?” Kenwright asked. “Leo talked of you in his journal. You Black Badges really are persistent, I’ll give you that.”

Lance raised his gun and pointed it at the man’s head.

“Shut up and die,” he said.

“I wouldn't do that if I were you. I've got my knife next to some very sensitive places. Even if you can shoot me before I shoot you my hand will almost certainly slip and kill your friend here.”

Lance continued to move deeper into the room. He was slowly side stepping, working his way around the outside of the area and was about twenty feet away from his target.

“Token's prepared to die if it means killing you.”

After looking down at his victim for a moment Kenwright let out a laugh. It was a polite, controlled laugh.

“Everyone says they're prepared to die. It's a rather romantic sentiment but when its finally happening to you, trust me, no one is

prepared,” Kenwright paused as he looked back down at Token. “No one meets it gracefully.”

Sweat was running down Lance’s face and a bead fell into his eye, stinging it. He had his gun in his left hand and could feel it shaking slightly. He flexed his right hand, his usual shooting hand, but could barely move it thanks to the knife wound. But at this distance he didn’t trust his ability to get off a clean shot using only his left hand. He continued to slowly move, trying to find some sort of an angle that would give him an advantage.

“Why all the killing, Kenwright?” Lance asked in an attempt to buy himself some time. This time Kenwright’s laugh was genuine.

“Really? You want to know why, Mr. Parker? Isn't that a bit cliché?”

Lance didn't respond. He carefully stepped over a broken book case as he worked his way along the far wall of the room. He was now directly across from the stairwell.

Kenwright watched him for several moments and then finally shook his head.

“Fine, I'll tell you why. It's this city, you see. It's sick. I watched for years as it ate away at itself like a cancer. People were just roaming the streets freely partaking in drugs, prostitution and all manners of other unpleasant activities. The city was dying and yet people were so desensitized that they didn't even bother to get outraged any more.”

He paused and moved the knife slightly in Token's chest. Toke shuddered and a new

stream of blood appeared and ran down his torso onto the table.

“I did my best to help as a cop, but people needed to be shocked awake. They needed a monster to fear.”

The controlled mask of Officer Dylan Kenwright fell away and a strange, psychotic grin appeared on his face as he continued to speak. Gone was the Sandpoint Policeman, and now Lance knew he was fully being addressed by the Sandpoint Slasher.

“They needed a reason to stay off the streets at night, a reason not to go prowl the dark corners for hookers or the alleyways for drugs. The city used to feast upon itself but now the only one out there feeding is me. And I’m very careful to only do what I must.

Just a nibble every once in a while to remind people to stay in line.”

“You're insane,” Lance said.

He had chosen a spot on that far wall and was staying there, waiting for his moment.

“No! I'm a genuine public servant!”

Kenwright screamed. “I'm not just writing traffic tickets and breaking up domestic disputes. I single handedly scared this city straight! I cleaned up the streets! If a few innocent people have to die to enforce the peace then that's the price. I can live with that.”

“I can't.”

Lance took a deep breath and focused on keeping his left hand steady as he shifted his aim slightly and pulled the trigger.

Kenwright fired as well. Lance watched as

his bullet grazed the side of the Slasher's head. He had missed by less than an inch while Kenwright hadn't missed at all. His shot hit Lance in the upper right of his chest. Lance fell back against the wall and slowly slid down to the floor.

His gun fell from his hand as he sat there, struggling to breathe. He put his hand over the wound, trying to keep pressure on it to slow the bleeding. Two words ran through his mind over and over on a constant loop. I missed.

Kenwright slowly approached, a confident smile on his face. He stopped a few feet away and looked down at Lance. He wiped the blood away from his head where Lance's bullet had grazed him and held the fingers in

front of his eyes. He then returned his gaze to Lance.

“I gotta hand it to you, you almost got me. You and that motley crew that you assembled, you guys did good work. But all good things come to an end, Mr. Parker. Once I'm done here I'm going to visit the luscious Detective Lamonte.”

He stepped closer and bent down slightly.

“You know, between you and me, I've always had a thing for her. I think I might have to break my own rules and take my time with her and savor the experience. You wouldn't happen to want to make my life a little easier and tell me where she's at would you?”

“Right here,” Devin announced loudly.

She was standing across the room at the top of the stairs. Sweat was pouring down her face and she was forced to lean against the door frame to keep from falling to the floor. The climb up the stairs had taught her a new definition to the word pain but right now all she was thinking about was her aim as she raised her gun.

Kenwright spun around and raised his own weapon but was a moment too late. Devin fired. The bullet caught the Slasher in the shoulder and sent him stumbling backwards into the wall. She fired a second time, this shot hitting him in the chest. As he began sliding down the wall she fired a third time, this one striking him directly in the head. He blinked twice after he hit the floor then

slumped onto his side and slowly closed his eyes and died.

Devin stumbled forward, almost falling to the ground. She took another wobbly step, and then another as she made her way to the middle of the room to check on Token. She looked and saw that he had been stabbed several times but the large cut, the signature X of the Slasher, had only just been started. He was breathing and she worked quickly to untie him.

“Is he going to make it?”

She looked up to see Lance shuffling towards them. He was hunched over and was clutching his chest and she could see blood seeping from his wound.

“I think so.”

Lance coughed. It was a terrible, wet cough and when he removed his hand from his mouth there was blood on it. He wiped it on his shirt and then leaned down next to Toke's ear.

“We got him.”

The sound of sirens was getting louder and louder outside. It seemed that Forsythe really had sent everything to their location. Lance stood up and stared across the table at Devin. She met his gaze and they stood like that for a long moment, neither of them doing or saying anything. Finally he offered the slightest of smiles and spoke.

“Make sure he gets taken care of,” he said, gesturing towards Token.

He then turned away and stumbled toward a large window on the back wall of the room.

He pushed it open and stepped out onto the fire escape and then disappeared from view.

X
X X X X X X

Devin sat on the back bumper of an ambulance, numb to the madness all around her. The sun was just beginning to rise and she stared at its first rays on the horizon. Police cars, ambulances, fire trucks, news vans and hundreds of onlookers had swarmed the building. Token was being transported to the hospital and the paramedics told her that his chances of survival were high.

People continued to stop and congratulate her as they walked past. She had been called a hero almost twenty times in the past ten

minutes and every time it had been said she had to resist the urge to laugh. All she could think about was all of the people that had died, all the compromises that had been made. None of it felt very heroic to her at the moment.

A firefighter in the distance caught her attention and she watched him move towards an ambulance. He appeared to be stumbling and as he pulled the doors to the back of the ambulance open she caught a glimpse of his face. It was Lance.

Devin got to her feet and her cell phone rang. She pulled it out and saw that it was her brother, Murray Lamonte.

“Sis, I'm glad I caught you. Your friend Leo asked me to dig into something for him and said it was vital that you guys get the

information but now I can't seem to reach him. Is he okay?" Murray asked.

It had been almost a half hour since she had last pictured Leo's lifeless body laying there on the coffee table. Now the image was back at the forefront of her mind. She thought about telling Murray what had happened but couldn't bring herself to form the words.

"Just tell me what you found," she said.

"That's just it, sis. I didn't find anything. That act of congress that he gave me, the one he said supposedly established some secret police organization. It doesn't exist."

She returned her attention to the ambulance and saw Lance climb out of the back with some medical supplies. He stopped and looked at her. They stared at one another for a moment. She turned away slightly so that

he couldn't see as she slowly pulled her gun out.

“You're sure about this?” she asked her brother.

“Of course I'm sure.”

“You're absolutely positive?”

“Devin, I checked every resource there is. There's no record that this organization ever existed.”

The crushing realization of what this meant came crashing down upon her. Every dark thought she had about Lance, every worst case scenario about his real motives, Murray had just absolutely and positively confirmed them for her. There was no Black Badge organization. Just a brilliant cop killer who she now viewed to be every bit the monster that the Sandpoint Slasher had been.

Devin dropped her phone and brought her gun up as she turned back towards the ambulance in the distance. There was no one there and her eyes darted around the chaotic crime scene as she looked for any trace of him. There were just too many people and after a moment she slowly lowered her gun. Lance Parker was gone.

END OF SEASON ONE

Black Badge is Copyright © 2010 A.C. Hall