

Previously on Black Badge: Sandpoint Police Officer Leo Banks lost his job after telling the media that he believed the Sandpoint Slasher was a cop. Lance recruited Leo to join his team as they try to stop the serial killer that continues to terrorize the town. Devin and Leo decided to help Lance for now while they secretly investigate him and the Black Badge organization. With increased scrutiny on cops Lance and the team were able to come up with a six name suspect list but were hit with devastating news when the latest victim turned out to be Token's grandmother.

Devin turned the corner and then stopped as she arrived at Token's house. She got out and was surprised to see Lance sitting on the

porch steps smoking a cigarette. He looked even worse than he did when she left early that morning.

“I didn’t know you smoked,” she said as she approached.

He pulled the cigarette out of his mouth and looked at it. He frowned and then tossed it onto the sidewalk.

“I don’t.”

Devin sat down beside him.

“Did you sleep?” she asked even though she knew the answer.

Lance shook his head no.

“I was up with Token while he notified family members and stuff like that.”

She sat for a moment, thinking about how awful of a situation this was.

“How’s he doing?”

After a moment Lance shrugged.

“It’s hard to tell. He went to bed just a bit ago.”

She knew that Lance felt badly about the murder. He seemed to feel responsible for it since it was his tactics that forced the Slasher into the projects.

“You know this wasn’t your fault, right?” she asked.

Lance stood up.

“Why are you here? Shouldn’t you still be at the station?” he asked, completely changing the subject.

She looked up at him. She wanted to say more about Token but knew better than to press him on it.

“Lunch break. I wanted to come by and do a little work on the suspect list.”

He nodded and then opened the front door. He motioned for her to go inside and then followed. She went to the kitchen and got a bottle of water and then returned to the living room. Lance was looking for something at his desk. After a moment he turned towards her.

“Did you take the personnel files on the suspects?”

She shook her head.

“No, they were on your desk when I left this morning.”

He returned to searching his desk, clearly growing irritated.

“Did Leo take them for some reason?” he asked.

“No, he left before I did.”

Lance slammed one of the drawers on his desk.

“Damn it!”

It was clear that he was past the point of exhaustion. Devin figured that it had been at least three days since he had last slept.

“It’s okay, Lance, I’m sure they’re around here somewhere,” she said as she started searching around the room.

Lance stood up quickly.

“Toke!” he yelled.

Devin watched as he ran towards Tokens bedroom. She had no idea what he was doing but followed him. Lance flung the door open and stepped inside. There was no one there. He kicked the door hard.

“Settle down and tell me what’s happening,” Devin said.

Lance looked up at her, fixing her with his intense stare.

“I think Toke’s going after the suspects on his own.”



Created and Written by A.C. Hall
Episode 4 – A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief

Lance typed furiously on the police computer inside Devin’s car. They were heading towards downtown but so far didn’t have a specific destination. After reading the screen Lance cursed and then started typing again.

“Shanley, Rudolph and Hawthorne are all at the station. I doubt Token would go after them there.”

“Where are the other suspects at right now?” Devin asked.

“I’m trying to figure that out,” Lance growled.

“Well I’m driving in circles here!”

Lance ignored her and kept typing. A message popped up at the bottom of the screen.

“Hold on,” he said as he read it.

After a moment he spoke again.

“Downtown, corner of Market Avenue and 25th street.”

Devin slammed on the gas.

“What’d you find?”

“Officer Tripp and his partner just came under fire from a car full of gang members. Kenwright and his partner are in the area and they’re responding to the call.”

“He’s really doing it. I know he’s grieving but I can’t believe he’d be so stupid,” Devin said.

A dark thought entered Devin’s mind and she looked at Lance out of the corner of her eye.

“I bet a part of you is happy with what’s happening here.”

Lance turned toward her.

“Excuse me?”

“I mean, it doesn’t go along with any of your fancy schemes, but I bet this suits you just fine.”

“What does?” he asked, growing irritated.

“Token killing off the suspects. It may not be pretty but if he succeeds in taking them all out then the Slasher’s dead. Problem solved.”

Lance sat very still for several moments. When he finally spoke his voice was as intense and intimidating as Devin had ever heard.

“I’ve never taken part in the death of a cop unless I was absolutely positive that they deserved it,” he said. “Never have and never will.”

It was clear that nothing more should be said on the subject so Devin stayed silent as they sped towards the shootout. As they got closer they could hear gunfire. When they were right around the corner Lance pointed at the curb.

“Let me out here and I’ll go get Token. You go aide the officers under fire. Once Token sees that you’re over there he’ll come to his senses and call off the assault.”

“And if he doesn’t?” Devin asked as she pulled up to the curb.

“Just get over there and make sure no one gets killed. I’ll take care of Toke,” Lance said as he got out.

Devin pulled away and Lance jogged to the corner and peered around. Token and three other men were behind a car on the near side of the street exchanging fire with officers who were on the other side of the street. There were four cops and they were using their two police cruisers for cover. Devin was just now pulling up to join her fellow officers.

Lance went into a dead sprint towards Token. He knew that if one of the gang members saw him approaching it was possible they'd shoot him. He also recognized that it was lucky that none of the cops had been shot yet. Getting to Toke as quickly as he could and ending the shootout was the only thing on Lance's mind as he ran towards his friend.

None of the gang members saw him and Lance dove at Token from behind and drug him to the ground. Tears were streaming down Toke's face as he fought wildly to get out from under Lance.

“Get off of me!” he screamed.

Lance fought to keep him pinned to the ground but Token was resisting much more strongly than he had anticipated.

“No! This isn’t the way! Call this off now!” Lance yelled.

Token twisted beneath his friend, fighting in a desperate frenzy to get free.

“He killed my Grandma! He killed her!”

It was clear that just telling him to stop wasn’t going to work so Lance took another route.

“Devin is over there with those cops right now. If you don’t call this off she could get killed.”

Token stopped struggling.

“Did you really bring her here?”

“She’s here. Now you need to decide very quickly whether or not you want her death on your conscience.”

“Let me up,” Toke commanded.

Slowly Lance released the pressure on his friend and allowed him to get to his feet. Token peered over the top of the car and saw Devin on the other side of the street. He crouched back down and shook his head.

“You bastard. Why won’t you let me have my revenge?” he asked, looking at Lance with tear filled eyes.

“Because this isn’t the way. End this before it becomes unfixable.”

Token again peeked above the car and looked at Devin.

“We’ll get the son of a bitch that killed your grandma. But we’re going to do it the right way,” Lance said.

After wiping the tears from his eyes Token addressed the three gang members who were still firing at the cops.

“Guys! Stop firing!”

All but one of them heard him and Token grabbed the man to get his attention.

“We need to get the hell out of here,” Toke told them.

“I’ve got a cousin that lives one street over. We can cut through some of these lots and be there in less than a minute,” one of the men said.

Token looked at Lance who nodded his approval.

“Alright, let’s go,” Token said.

The five of them ran as fast as they could away from the bullet ridden car they had been using as cover and towards the house where they could hide out.

X X

Leo sat in his car, trying to work up the nerve to follow through on his plan. After talking to Devin the only thing they knew for sure about the Black Badges was that Captain Forsythe was aware of their existence. Leo had decided to take to heart Devin's suggestion that he stop thinking like a cop and that had lead him to be parked down the street from the Captain's house. He took a few more deep breaths and then got out of the car.

He tried to appear as nonchalant as he could as he walked down the street towards the house. He was wearing a baseball cap and had it pulled low over his eyes. When he got to the Captain's house he carefully looked around to make sure no one was

paying too much attention to him. Once he was certain no one was watching he approached the front door.

Leo pulled his lock picking tools out of his pocket and began working to unlock the door. He wasn't very skilled at using them but within a few minutes he had the door open and was inside. He went to the alarm and punched in a code to deactivate it. He let out a sigh of relief when it worked and the system shut down. He had called in a long standing favor with a friend at the alarm company in order to get the code but until this moment had been unsure if the number his friend gave him was going to work.

He began moving through the empty house, looking around for the location of the

office or study. Devin had told him that the Captain had been working twenty hour days at the station and that his wife had gone to visit her mother out of state. Seeing as the couple's two children were grown with families of their own Leo didn't think he needed to worry too much about somebody showing up at the house in the middle of the day to catch him.

Not finding anything of interest on the first floor, Leo went up the stairs. The first door he came to lead to an office. He poked his head in and saw a bookcase that held awards, commendations and photos of the Captain and other cops. Leo stood there longer than he had intended, looking longingly at the items on the shelf. Just a few days before he had been one of them,

fighting the good fight on the right side of the law. Now he was just a guy breaking into a house.

Leo shook his head and turned away from the bookcase. He knew getting down about it now wasn't going to do any good. There was a file cabinet and he pulled the first drawer open and looked inside. It was crammed full with files and he started pulling them out and stacking them on the desk.

It took him over an hour to go through the entire contents of the filing cabinet. He found nothing of consequence and started putting them all back. Once he was done replacing everything into the cabinet Leo turned on the computer that sat on top of the

desk. He waited as it booted up. A screen came up asking for a password.

“Of course,” Leo muttered.

He tried four or five different passwords but was completely guessing at what it would be. None of them worked and he was hesitant to keep trying, afraid that the computer may lock up and tip off Forsythe that someone had been in the house. Leo reached to shut it off but his finger paused above the power button as a thought occurred to him. He stayed like that for a moment, trying to decide how crazy of an idea it was. Finally he pulled his hand back and pulled out his phone. He dialed Lance’s cell.

“What is it Leo?” Lance answered.

“Uh, listen, I was just wondering, uh, you wouldn’t happen to have the password to Captain Forsythe’s home computer would you?” Leo asked.

After a pause Lance responded.

“It’s likely one of these two passwords,” he said, rattling off two long, complex passwords.

Leo wrote each of them down. He was growing more and more nervous as he stayed on the phone. He was essentially asking Lance to help in an investigation against himself. It was something he knew wouldn’t go over well if Lance knew what was happening.

“Okay, thanks. I just needed it because, well, what I’m trying to do is...” Leo was

fumbling his words as he tried to come up with an explanation that made sense.

“Leo,” Lance said, interrupting him. “I trust you.”

With that Lance hung up. Leo let out a long breath and then tried the first password. It didn't work and he moved onto the second one. This one worked and the system unlocked. He had been in the house longer than he was comfortable with so he quickly began clicking through files, looking for anything related to the Black Badge.

After a few minutes he opened up the Captain's email and began scrolling through them. This was separate from his work email and mostly there were messages to and from friends and family members. Leo moved backwards through the emails to a

little over a year ago around the time that Devin had first ran into Lance. There was an email there, sent to Randy Brown, Chief of Police. The subject line was “ bb sighting”. Leo opened it.

Chief Brown,

Two of my officers had a run in with a Black Badge this evening. I handled the situation but I don't like threatening my officer's careers over something that we know so little about. We need to meet and talk about this. I know you've been reluctant to tell me more about this subject but I'm uncomfortable allowing these Black Badges to run free without knowing more about them. Call me in the morning.

Forsythe

Leo copied the contents of the email down on a sheet of paper. He then spent a few more minutes scrolling through emails but after seeing no others that were relevant he shut down the computer. He carefully set up the room the way it was when he had arrived and then left the house.

X X

The front door to Token’s house opened and Devin walked in. Lance was working on his computer and turned around when she slammed the door.

“Where is he?” she asked.

She had spent the last five hours filling out paperwork and taking part in meetings about the shooting. Her anger towards Toke had been growing throughout the day and she was ready to explode. Lance pointed towards the kitchen just as Token came walking into the living room.

“What the hell were you thinking?” Devin yelled as she approached him.

“I just... I lost it.”

Devin was right in front of him now.

“You’re damn right you lost it. I mean seriously Token, how stupid are you? To just gather up a posse of killers and head out to murder cops that very well might be completely innocent? What were you thinking?”

“It’s just, my grandma...”

“To hell with that, don’t you dare use that as an excuse,” Devin said, pointing her finger in his face. “You think she’d be proud of what you tried to do out there today? You realize that I should haul you in right now, don’t you?”

“But the investigation...”

“Forget about the investigation! Innocent people came close to losing their lives out there today. That’s the exact thing I thought we were working together to prevent.”

Devin began pacing back and forth. After a moment she spoke again.

“I was honestly starting to think there was more to you, Token. But maybe you are just a common gang thug after all.”

Toke turned and stormed out of the room. A moment later the back door slammed.

Devin let out an exasperated sigh and then turned towards Lance. He had remained silent during the entire exchange.

“Thanks for the backup. I could’ve used your help with that.”

“Losing a family member to violence is tough. He’s grieving,” Lance responded quietly.

Devin scoffed.

“His grief almost got innocent people killed.”

“Almost,” Lance said.

“Next time we probably won’t be so lucky,” Devin said.

“Probably not.”

Devin stared at him. He was looking down at the floor. After a moment he looked up

and returned her stare. There were dark bags beneath his eyes.

“You still haven’t slept,” Devin said matter of factly.

Lance turned back towards the computer.

“I’ve got work to do.”

She walked away, knowing it was pointless to try to talk to him any more. She made her way into the kitchen and looked out the back window. Token was standing in the middle of the yard, staring up at the sky. She watched him for a moment. As she thought about the terrible tragedy that he had suffered less than twenty four hours ago her anger towards him softened. She went out the back door and approached him. He noticed her there but didn’t turn to face her.

“She raised me. Did you know that?” he said. “I’m sure you hear stories like this twenty times a day. Mom’s an addict, dad’s in prison and the sweet old grandma is the only one left to raise the disobedient kid.”

He turned to face her and let out a quiet laugh.

“I’m a straight up ghetto stereotype.”

She offered him a slight smile, unsure of what else to do or say. She was still angry over what he had done but it was clear that he was deeply hurting. After a long stretch of silence Token approached her and spoke.

“I know I screwed up bad today and I’m so sorry. After this is all over, if you want to arrest me then you can. I won’t fight you or run away,” he said calmly. “But please

Devin, let me help get this guy first. Let me be a part of bringing him to justice.”

He paused for a long moment.

“After that you can kill me for all I care. All I want is for the guy who did this to pay.”

Devin reached out and squeezed his shoulder.

“I know you’re hurting Token but that was bad today. That was beyond bad.”

Toke nodded.

“I know.”

“Something like that can never happen again. I need to know that I can trust you when you tell me that it won’t.”

“It won’t, Devin. Lance is right, for this to matter it has to be done right and we have to

know we're taking down the right person. I'm not going to go off like that again."

The two stood there in silence for several minutes. Devin sat down in the grass and Token sat beside her. It was several moments before she spoke.

"This whole thing is so close to being out of control."

"When Lance is involved it always feels that way. But in the end he always seems to have some sort of a brilliant plan," Token responded.

Devin picked some of the grass and twirled it around in her fingers.

"He hasn't been sleeping," she said. "I think he blames himself for what happened to your grandmother."

“I know. I tried to talk to him but, well, you know how that goes sometimes.”

The two of them chuckled. After another moment of silence Devin lay down on her back and looked up at the late afternoon sky. Token did the same and they stayed that way for some time, neither saying anything.

“It wasn’t that long ago that I was just a regular cop,” Devin said.

“Sounds boring.”

She laughed.

“I’d take boring right about now.”

Her cell phone rang and she sat up and pulled it out of her pocket.

“Hey Leo, what’s up?” she said as she answered the call.

Token sat up and watched her as she spoke.

“Right. Okay. I’ll meet you there in about forty five minutes,” she said.

She stood up and brushed off her pants.

“I need to get going. Leo has something he needs to talk to me about.”

Token smiled and nodded. He watched her walk away and then lay back down in the grass.

X X

Lance rubbed his eyes as he tried to keep himself focused. He was sitting in his car, watching the movements of Sandpoint Police Department Officer Jordan Shanley. His was the first name they had added to their short list of suspects for the Slasher. They were parked downtown and Shanley

and his partner, a young Latino man, had gone inside a store about fifteen minutes ago. Lance had been following them for over an hour as they patrolled the city but so far it had been completely uneventful. It was dark outside now and the effects of getting no sleep were wearing on him.

The two officers emerged from the store and walked back towards their cruiser. Shanley was physically average in just about every category and yet there was something about the way he carried himself that hinted at a hidden confidence. He ran a hand through his thinning hair before getting into the drivers seat of the car and pulling away. Lance waited a few moments and then followed. He grabbed his cell phone off the dash board and called Devin.

“Hello?” she answered.

“What can you tell me about the guy they’ve partnered with Shanley? He’s a young Latino guy, mid twenties.”

“Why aren’t you at home resting?” Devin asked.

“Some of Token’s family members are over there. I couldn’t be around that,” he answered. “Besides, we’ve changed the course of events here. Because of us the Slasher is operating in different areas. I have a responsibility to deal with the consequences of that.”

“Lance...”

“Please, Devin, just tell me about the partner.”

After a pause she did as he asked.

“His name is Gomez. He’s a good kid, seems bright. That’s about all I could tell you off the top of my head.”

Lance followed the cruiser around a corner. He heard laughter on the other end of the phone.

“Is that Leo with you?”

Devin paused a moment before answering.

“Yeah. We’re having dinner and a few drinks over here at Kelly’s Bistro,” she said, sounding somewhat embarrassed. “It’s on 57th street.”

When Lance didn’t immediately respond she spoke again.

“You’re welcome to join us. A nice dinner and a few drinks may be just what you need,” she said, trying her best not to sound awkward.

“You two have a good time,” Lance said.
“Thanks for the info on Gomez.”

“Sure,” she responded just before he hung up the phone.

Lance continued to tail the cruiser as it worked its way through the city. They were in a less developed area of downtown now and Shanley slowed his car to a stop. Lance watched as Gomez got out and approached a building. A moment later Shanley drove off, leaving his partner behind.

“What the hell?” Lance muttered.

Gomez turned quickly and watched his partner speed away. Lance went after the cruiser. Adrenaline began pumping through his body. If he was the killer, Shanley now had a perfect opportunity to commit a murder with his partner out of the car. The

officer drove the cruiser down several streets before working his way back towards the area where he had left his partner. He then parked next to a vacant building.

Lance watched as Shanley got out and rushed inside the building. He pulled out his own gun and jumped out and followed. He quickly made his way into the building. There was a staircase leading upwards and Shanley was moving up it quickly. Lance followed him, his heart pounding in his chest at the prospect of being so close to catching the Sandpoint Slasher.

When he reached the top of the stairs he saw that it opened into a long, dark hallway. This had at one time been an apartment building and each of the apartment doors were open. Shanley was halfway down the

hall running away and Lance took a few steps after him. He raised his gun as he passed the first open apartment and was about to yell for Shanley to freeze when he realized how much of a fool he had been.

Officer Gomez stepped out of the shadowy opening of the first apartment, his gun aimed directly at the back of Lance's head. Lance silently cursed himself for being so stupid. He had been too tired to be as cautious as he normally would. Gomez and Shanley had known they were being followed and they set up this trap to get him out in the open. It was a realization that did Lance little good at the moment.

“Not another step,” Gomez said.

Shanley stopped running and turned around. He too pulled his gun and aimed it at Lance.

“I’d like to know who you are and why you’ve been following my partner and me for the last hour,” Shanley said.

END OF EPISODE FOUR

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