

Previously on Black Badge: Lance was wounded as he narrowly escaped capture at the hands of Officer Shanley. Devin reluctantly aided him in his escape and came under fire at the station for her actions. However, she was able to find evidence that allowed them to eliminate Shanley from their list of suspects and she got a sample of Lance's blood that she planned to use to try to discover his true identity. An Internal Affairs agent named Vanderbilt showed up asking questions and Devin gave his number to Lance. Lance met with the man and had a tense conversation. Devin and Leo planted a listening device in Vanderbilt's car and overheard him leaving a message for the Chief of Police and from it they learned that only the Chief has true knowledge of the Black Badges.

Token yawned as he stared at the house. He was in his car with the top down, parked halfway down the street keeping an eye on the home of Sandpoint Police Officer Danny Rudolph. While Lance spent several days mending up he was using Toke and his gang contacts to surveil the five remaining Slasher suspects. Token had thought it was a great idea until he learned that Lance wanted him to sit on one of the suspects himself. Three hours had passed and so far Rudolph hadn't left his house.

Toke pulled out his cell phone and dialed the number of one of the gang members that was watching another suspect.

"Hey bro, any movement over there?" Token asked.

After hearing that they too were having a boring night he spoke again.

"Do me a favor and call the other guys and see if they've got anything to report on their suspects."

He hung up the phone and rubbed his eyes.

"Marion Washington!"

The loud voice startled him and Toke looked to his left to see a man standing next to his car. He hadn't noticed him approach but he immediately recognized him. It was Vanderbilt, the Internal Affairs officer.

"What's Sandpoint's very own ghetto Robin Hood doing in this part of town?" Vanderbilt asked.

Token smiled as he answered.

"I was thinking of buying some real estate in this area. Thought I'd cruise on through here and see what was available."

Vanderbilt leaned back as he let loose with a long, deep laugh.

“That’s wonderful, Marion, that really is. It’s a buyers market these days. A buyer’s market for sure!”

“That’s what my realtor keeps telling me,” Toke responded, wondering how long the man was going to go on with the exchange.

Vanderbilt pulled his sunglasses off and started cleaning them with his tie. He did this for several moments until finally speaking again.

“You know, this new Black Badge really is something. Using local gangs to do all of his work for him? It’s genius, it really is.”

He paused to put his sunglasses back on.

“But you see, I can't have this guy come rolling into town and doing my job for me. It makes me look bad and I really hate it when people make me look bad. So I'm afraid I'm going to have to put a stop to you and your banger friends surveiling my cops.”

Toke was about to respond when his cell phone started to ring.

“I’ll bet you three dollars that it’s one of your gang buddies calling to tell you that they’ve just been shaken down by some cops and that they won’t be able to continue their surveillance,” Vanderbilt said. “Come on man, three dollars. Whaddya say?”

The screen on the cell confirmed that it was one of the gang members doing surveillance calling. Token didn’t answer it, but instead looked back up at Vanderbilt.

“Is that what this is right now? A shake down?”

Vanderbilt smiled as he answered.

“Something like that.”

He pulled out his gun and fired at the front tire of the car, blowing it out.

“Whoa!” Token yelled.

Vanderbilt aimed at the back tire and blew it out as well. He then aimed at the hood of the car and emptied his clip through it into the engine.

“Come on man! Not my car!”

After removing his shades Vanderbilt slowly looked at the damage he had caused to the car. He smiled and nodded his head slowly.

“Oh yeah. Very nice.”

He put his sunglasses back on and leaned down into Token’s face.

“Tell the Black Badge that if I see any more gang bangers surveilling cops then I'm going to lock them up and throw away the key. And please, make it sound like I was really serious about it too, okay? Gang cars, gang colors, gang tattoos, I see any of it following my cops and I'm coming down on them hard.”

Vanderbilt started to leave but stopped near the back of the car and turned around.

“My brother in law runs a small auto repair business a few towns over. If you want I'll give him a call and tell him to expect you. His prices are really fair, I'm telling you,” he said.

He chuckled as he walked away.



Created and Written by A.C. Hall
Episode 6 – Driven By Their Beating Hearts

Devin tapped her foot, annoyed to have been waiting this long. She was in the basement of the police station where all of the lab work was done. The lab tech she had asked to analyze Lance's blood had summoned her down here but she knew it was far too early for him to have results. He'd kept her waiting for over thirty minutes by the time he finally emerged from one of the back labs and approached her. Despite being thirty years old he still looked like he was fresh out of college. He had long, shoulder length hair that always seemed to be in his face.

“What's this about Bradley?” she asked, trying not to sound too irritated.

“It’s about the shirt you wanted me to analyze.”

She sighed. Bradley wasn’t the brightest lab tech on staff. It was the exact reason she had chosen him.

“What about the shirt?”

“It didn’t have any of the proper paperwork with it.”

Devin looked around to see if any of the other lab techs had overheard. None of them seemed to be paying attention. She grabbed Bradley by the arm and led him out into the hallway.

“I know it didn’t have any paperwork with it, Bradley. That’s why when I asked you to do it I said ‘can you do me a favor and analyze the blood on this shirt and keep it off the books’.”

He stared at her dumbly.

“That’s what off the books means. It means no paperwork, nothing official,” Devin said.

“Oh,” he said, pausing to sweep his hair out of his face. “Something like that would have to be done after hours.”

“That’s fine.”

“Well, the thing is, if I’m doing this off the books then I can’t clock in to do it. So I’d be working over time without getting any pay.”

She could feel her anger rising but fought to keep it in check.

“Whatever happened to one colleague doing another colleague a favor?” she asked.

“I don’t understand. Is the favor you paying me?”

Devin took several deep breaths to calm herself down. She then reached into her pocket and pulled out her money clip. She peeled off two hundred dollar bills and held them out.

“We’re talking over time here, Devin,” he paused dramatically. “Over time.”

She had to bite her lip to keep from screaming at him as she peeled off another hundred dollar bill. He took them from her and shoved them into his pocket.

“The next time you call it better be to tell me you have my results ready.”

Her cell phone rang and Devin walked away from Bradley to answer it.

“Come outside. Use the back exit of the station. We’re in Token’s car,” Lance said.

He hung up before she could respond. She was practically stomping through the station as she made her way towards the back exit. The last thing she wanted right now was to deal with Lance. Devin finally reached the exit and stepped outside. No one used the back exit so the road behind the station was usually pretty empty. She looked around for Token's convertible but didn't see it. The only car parked there was a black luxury car. After a moment the window rolled down and revealed Token sitting in the driver's seat. He waved her over.

Devin approached the car. She looked in and saw that Lance was in the passenger's seat and Leo was in the back seat. She also noticed that Token was wearing a suit and a tie. She tried to stifle a chuckle as she looked at him.

"What's with the car and the suit?"

"Vanderbilt made it clear in no uncertain terms that he was going to harshly punish any ganglike people he saw surveilling cops," Token answered, obviously a bit embarrassed.

Devin looked at him for another moment and then nodded.

"Well I like it."

She got into the backseat and Leo reached over and squeezed her arm and offered her a smile. It made her feel better but as she looked up at Lance her mood instantly darkened.

"What do you want? I still have real work to do you know," she said.

"One of the reasons I chose you was because of your incredible capacity for multi-tasking."

Devin laughed bitterly.

"You didn't choose me. I just happened to be a hapless rookie you came across a year ago while shaking down another dirty cop."

Lance turned all the way around in his seat.

"Wait, that was you?"

Token and Leo both laughed but Devin wasn't very amused. After a moment Lance got back down to business.

"Like Token told you, our ability to use gang members for surveillance has been taken away from us. There are five suspects left and there are four of us so here's what we're going to do. Each of us is going to take one suspect. Watch

them, provoke them, at this point I don't care, do whatever you feel you need to do so long as it helps us determine if they are the Sandpoint Slasher. If we're going to prevent any more people from falling victim to this maniac then we're going to need to catch them soon.”

At the mention of more victims Token’s grip tightened on the steering wheel. He thought about his grandma and silently renewed his vow to help bring the monster that killed her to justice.

“Who’s going to go after the fifth suspect?” Devin asked.

“I put a call into Vanderbilt this morning and turned him on to one of the suspects. I told him that this was my main suspect for the Sandpoint Slasher and that if he would help me investigate him then I’d be able to leave town faster.”

Devin shook her head.

“Do you think that’s wise? This guy seems like a real loose canon.”

“Something doesn’t sit right with me about this guy,” Lance responded. “Why did he show up now? Why aggressively come after me at this point in my investigation? I know it’s a risk but how he responds to this task will tell us everything we need to know about his true intentions.”

“So who are our suspects?” Leo asked.

“Leo, you have Dylan Kenwright. Token, you’ve got Danny Rudolph. I’m taking Alex Hawthorne. I gave Jack Tripp to Vanderbilt. That leaves Harriet Jeter for Devin.”

Devin scoffed.

“Why do I get the only woman suspect?”

“That’s just how it worked out,” Lance answered.

“You are aware that women rarely become serial killers, right?” she asked angrily.

“It’s just how it worked out,” Lance repeated.

Devin flung the car door open and stepped out. She slammed it hard and stormed back into the station. She was in an awful mood by the time she returned to the bullpen. At first she was confused to see it completely empty but then she remembered the huge department wide meeting they were having. She looked up at the clock and saw that it was just starting. She ran down the hallway to the large meeting room and opened the door.

The room was packed with every cop from the department. Captain Forsythe had made it very clear that attendance to the meeting was absolutely mandatory. She used to love being around her brother and sister cops but now Devin found herself scowling at them, wondering what dark secrets they may be hiding.

The Captain had even made the night shift cops show up for the meeting and as she made her way through the crowded room towards an open chair in the back she spotted all five of the remaining Slasher suspects. She stared at each of them hard, thinking dark thoughts, wishing she could just confront them then and there. She plopped down into the chair and crossed her arms.

Forsythe entered a moment later. He was at a podium on the far side of the room.

“This department is under siege,” he began. “The City of Sandpoint has always been somewhere that I was proud to call home and her citizens were people who I was proud to know. But they have been turned against us and it’s up to us to remedy that. Thanks to the ridiculous statements made by former officer Leo Banks...”

“Why were they ridiculous?” Devin called out, interrupting the Captain.

The room fell completely silent.

“Excuse me, Lamonte? Surely I must’ve misheard you,” Forsythe said.

Devin stood up. She gave no thought to what she was doing and instead spoke exactly what was on her mind.

“We all knew Leo Banks. He was a great cop and he was more intelligent than ninety nine percent of the people in this room. Why are we all so quick to dismiss what he said?”

Every eye in the room was staring at her. She started looking around. Seeing the angry expressions on most of their faces she began to realize what she had just done. Her cheeks turned red and she started stammering as she tried to take it back.

“I’m... I was... I...”

“How dare you Lamonte!” Forsythe bellowed from the podium.

“I’m sorry!” Devin yelled as she ran for the door.

She started to cry as she emerged into the hallway.

pulled back into a ponytail. She had a phone in her hand but tucked it into the pocket of the robe as she walked over to Lance and looked down at him.

“Are you okay?”

Lance smiled and nodded as she reached down and helped him to his feet. His wounds from a few nights ago were aching but for the most part Fumbles had done well. Lance looked down at the now empty coffee cup and slowly picked it up. He stared at it sadly.

“Unfortunately my coffee didn’t survive.”

The woman was staring at him strangely. Lance shook his head.

“I’m sorry. It’s just, I’m out of work you see and I walked all the way downtown just to buy myself a Java Kingdom coffee,” he paused for a moment while he looked at the cup longingly. “It was a wasteful way to spend my last three dollars but something about a cup of quality coffee always makes me feel better.”

After another moment Lance looked back at the woman and smiled.

“Oh well. As long as you’re okay, that’s all that matters.”

He waved and turned to walk away. He had almost reached the street before she called out to him.

“Wait a minute.”

Lance stopped and turned around.

“Why don’t you come inside and let me make you a cup of coffee?” she asked.

He held up his hands and shook his head.

“No, I couldn’t impose. I shouldn’t have mentioned the coffee in the first place.”

She smiled and gestured for him to come inside.

“Please, it’s the least I can do. I’d be having a very different night if it wasn’t for you.”

After hesitating for another moment Lance smiled and walked towards the woman.

“It’s not Java Kingdom but it’s still pretty good,” Mrs. Hawthorne said with a smile as she followed him into the house. “I’m Emily, by the way.”

“It’s nice to meet you Emily. I’m Kyle Saracen,” Lance said.

Leo pulled his hat down low as he walked through the darkened neighborhood. He was in one of the ritziest areas of Sandpoint. His nerves built with each step until finally he decided to pull out his cell phone and call Devin.

“Hello?” she answered.

“Hey, where are you at?”

“The station.”

“Still? Why don’t you just leave already? It’s late,” Leo said.

“I wanted to wait until I was sure everyone else had left. I couldn’t stand the idea of having to face any of them after what I said earlier.”

Leo chuckled darkly before he replied.

“Well I’m about to break into the Chief of Police’s house, if that makes you feel any better.”

Devin let out a dark laugh of her own.

“Oh God. Is this really our lives now?” she asked.

Before answering her Leo paused and glanced over his shoulder. He thought he had heard someone behind him but there was nobody there.

“I’m afraid so,” he said.

There was a moment of silence before Devin spoke again.

“You could blow off the thing with the Chief and just go watch your suspect.”

Leo shook his head as he answered.

“No, we need to know who we’re taking orders from. If the Black Badges aren’t what Lance has represented them as being then the things we’ve been doing for him will be even worse than they already are. And since Chief Brown is apparently the only one that knows anything then we have no choice but to go after him.”

Devin sighed.

“Be careful,” she said.

Leo smiled.

“Go home and get some rest,” he told her as he hung up.

As he continued towards the house he again got the feeling that someone was behind him. He turned around fully this time and slowly scanned the dark street and yards. He didn’t see anyone or anything there. But as he turned back and

continued on towards the Chief's house he couldn't shake the feeling that someone was there, following him from the shadows.

A panic was growing inside of him and his heart was pounding in his chest. He tried to tell himself that it was just an irrational feeling but no matter what he did he couldn't get it to leave. He picked up his pace, jogging now and when he reached the Chief's home he ran up the sidewalk towards it. He pulled out his lock picking tools and set to work on the door.

Sweat ran down his face as he worked with an unexplainable desperation. Deep down Leo felt certain that if he didn't get the door open quickly that something terrible was going to happen. He felt the lock turn and he moved inside as fast as he could. He closed the door and locked it behind him. He looked out one of the windows, scanning the dark yard for the lurking threat that he felt positive was there. He watched for almost five minutes but never saw anything. He finally began to calm down and turned towards the task of searching for clues.

The Chief and his wife were upstairs sleeping so Leo crept quietly through the bottom floor. He used his flashlight sparingly as he slowly worked through the home looking for any sort of information that might be helpful. Devin had been in the home once before at a holiday party and had told him that the office was downstairs. Leo located it and went inside. The wall was lined with bookshelves that were filled with books. There was a large oak desk in the room but there was no computer there.

Leo moved around the desk and saw a large filing cabinet. It was locked so he got his tools back out and picked it. He started carefully pulling out the files and going through them. The drawers were packed and it took him hours to go through all of the files. None of them had anything to do with the Police Department. It was a lifetime of tax returns, car insurance, life insurance and other mundane personal documents.

He sighed as he finished locking the cabinet. Devin had convinced him that there was no reason to search upstairs since it just had some bedrooms, a workout room and a media room. Leo felt dejected as he left the office and went back towards the front door empty handed. As he passed a door that lead to the garage he paused, an idea occurring to him.

to cover their faces. Devin pulled her gun but another man who had been standing behind her knocked it out of her hand.

She pressed herself against the side of the car and stared at the five of them. The way they were built, the looks in their eyes, the choice of the color of their bandannas, it all told her exactly who they were. These were cops.

They stared at her menacingly, daring her to make the first move. Devin spit in the face of the closest man.

“Cowards,” she said.

The man she had spit on came towards her. She ducked his punch and kned him as hard as she possibly could in the crotch. She knew it was likely the only blow she was going to land and she delighted in the fact that it had been a good one. The other four men began raining down punches on her. She tried to run but they had her surrounded. She kept her arms up to protect her face but their assault was too much and after just a few moments she dropped to the sidewalk.

She curled into a ball as they began kicking and stomping. She tried to keep her head protected but one of them stomped on it hard, slamming it down onto the sidewalk. Her body was on fire with pain and Devin welcomed the blackness as she fell unconscious.

END OF EPISODE SIX

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