

Previously on Black Badge: Lance left the home of his Slasher suspect Alex Hawthorne but not before meeting the man and seeing blood on his hand and shirt. Upon learning of Devin's injuries Lance snuck into the hospital disguised as a doctor. Token followed his Slasher suspect, Officer Danny Rudolph, to the bank and was about to confront him when armed robbers came rushing in. Toke and Rudolph teamed up to stop the robbery and in the process Token learned of Officer Rudolph's alibi for the night of the gang rumble. Back at the hospital Lance finally got into Devin's room where he saw her severe injuries and also learned that it had been cops who had done it to her. He was in the middle of talking to her about it when the Sandpoint Police Captain and Chief of Police showed up and demanded to know who he was.

“I take a special interest in police matters,” Lance said. “Call it a professional courtesy.”

Captain Forsythe looked hard at the employee badge Lance was wearing.

“Then why haven’t I ever seen you before Dr...” he paused as he read the name. “Jesús Gonzalez?”

Forsythe fixed him with a confused look and Lance smiled. His mind was racing as he hastily put together a plan to get past the two men and out of the room.

“Doctor Gonzalez has worked with me on a few cases in the past,” Devin said weakly.

“He’s a good man.”

Her words didn’t seem to appease the Captain but Chief Brown stepped closer and put his hand on Forsythe’s shoulder.

“The department is thankful for anyone in the city who takes an interest in the welfare of our cops,” Brown said.

His comment seemed to calm Forsythe for the moment and the two of them turned their attention to Devin.

“We have good news for you Detective,” Brown said. “We caught the mugger that did this to you.”

“You mean muggers. Plural,” Lance said.

The Chief turned towards him and shook his head.

“No, Doctor, it was just one man.”

Lance knew what they were doing. They knew that disgruntled cops had done this to Devin and they were playing damage control, trying to force feed her a story so she wouldn't reveal the ugly truth to the world.

The thought of them covering for the cops that committed the assault made him sick to his stomach and he had to bite the inside of his lip to keep his temper in check. He flipped open her chart and looked at it as he responded.

“Not a chance, Chief. I’ve seen injuries like these before. Devin here was on the wrong end of a serious beat down by what appears to be at least five men.”

Roberts and Forsythe exchanged a look but Lance continued before they could comment.

“And I don’t know where you got this mugger business from. Whoever did this knew how to fight. They had training, maybe military or I don’t know...” he paused for a long moment. “...maybe even police.”

His comment had the desired effect as both the Chief and the Captain immediately tensed up. They exchanged another look, this one full of concern and confusion. After a moment Chief Brown stepped toward Lance.

“Who did you say you were again?”

“They’re right, Doctor Gonzalez,” Devin said, trying to pull their attention away from Lance before he got himself into more trouble. “It was just one man and he did appear to be a mugger.”

Lance shot her an angry look. He knew she was just trying to help keep his cover in tact but he hated hearing her play along with their lie.

“I’m relieved to hear that you caught him,” Devin continued. “What will happen now Chief Brown?”

Brown turned back to Devin and smiled big, clearly pleased that she was going along with his story. He took her hand in his and held it.

“Now you rest, my dear. We’ve spoken with Doctor Hughes and he believes that you’ll be back on your feet in no time. Take a little time away to get recovered and recentered and then you’ll be back at work in the bullpen before you know it.”

The way he was treating her disgusted Lance. He could see in the man’s eyes just how overjoyed he was to not have a lawsuit on his hands. Lance desperately battled down the desire to punch the man in the side of the face. He felt himself shaking, on the brink of losing the struggle to control his temper.

“I need to leave,” he blurted out. “I have other patients.”

He lowered his head and walked towards the door, careful not to look at Chief Brown as he passed, knowing that he wouldn't be able to stop himself from attacking him if he did. Once he was back in the hallway he quickly made his way towards one of the exits.



Created and Written by A.C. Hall
Episode 8 – In My Quiet Moment

A dark thought gnawed at the back of Lance's mind as he made his way out of the hospital and to his car. He pictured the blood that had been on his suspect the night before. Officer Alex Hawthorne's hand and shirt had

someone else's blood on them and the things he had said about it had seemed strange.

Somebody got out of line and we had to take care of it. It echoed in Lance's mind, sounding more off each time.

He got into his car and pulled out his phone, his heart beating faster. He feared what he was going to do if his suspicion was right. He dialed the station and asked to speak with Vanderbilt.

"I'm sorry sir, Vanderbilt's not in right now. We actually haven't seen him since..."

Lance hung up the phone, uninterested in whatever else the receptionist had to say. He dialed Leo's number next.

"How is she?" Leo answered.

"She's going to be okay. Two cracked ribs, shoulder separation, a ligament tear in her

knee. She's a tough girl but she got hurt bad."

"Son of a bitch," Leo muttered angrily.

"Tell me who did it, Lance. I need to know."

Lance let out a long sigh before answering.

"It was cops, Leo."

"What?"

"Apparently they were in a big meeting and Devin was in a bad mood. The Captain was running you down, talking about how you were wrong about the Slasher being a cop," Lance said. "She defended you, said maybe you were right. Some of her brothers in blue didn't take too kindly to the comment."

"Give me their names," Leo said, his voice filled with malice.

"I don't have..."

“Give me their names!” Leo yelled, interrupting Lance.

“She doesn’t know, Leo! They wore masks.”

After giving Leo a few moments to calm down Lance spoke again.

“I need you to focus and do something for me. Call your friend at the station and find out when Hawthorne left early this morning.”

“Was he one of the guys that did this to her?” Leo asked angrily.

“I don’t know, okay? I’m just following a hunch here. Call the station and then call me back.”

Lance hung up and waited. A few minutes later his phone rang and he answered.

“Hawthorne left between midnight and one. He made a comment about going to a bar to meet up with a few other cops,” Leo said.

“What bar would they have gone to?”

“Probably Coopersmith’s. It’s close by and they give a big police discount.”

“Do you have a number?” Lance asked.

Leo looked the number up on the computer and then gave it to Lance.

“Okay. Call Token and fill him in on Devin’s condition. I’m going to look into this,” Lance said.

Leo started to say something else but Lance hung up the phone. He dialed the number to Coopersmith’s and waited for someone to answer.

“Coopersmith’s,” a man said.

“Hello there. My name’s Dan Smith. I’m an officer with the Sanpoint PD and me and the guys were in there drinking last night. The thing is, I had a few too many and I think I left my cell phone,” Lance said.

“Son, you must’ve been drunker than hell because there were no police in my bar last night.”

“You sure? We weren’t in uniform or anything.”

“I’ve been serving cops for twenty five years, in uniform and out. You and your friends weren’t drinking in here last night.”

Lance hung up the phone and started the car. He slammed it into gear and shoved down on the accelerator. He sharply turned a corner and headed off in the direction of Officer Alex Hawthorne’s house. His grip was tight

on the steering wheel as he replayed Hawthorne's words in his head over and over again. The *somebody* who had *gotten out of line* was Devin and Hawthorne and four other cops were the *we* that had *taken care of* her by savagely beating her.

Lance was oblivious to anything else as he sped across town. He pictured the beat down, watching it play out in his head again and again. In his mind there were four faceless assailants, men he hoped he'd have a chance to make pay in the future. But the fifth assailant was Alex Hawthorne, a wicked smile on his face as he punched and kicked at Devin, beating her down into the sidewalk.

Before he knew it he was at the house. He slammed on the brakes and the car slid to a stop. Lance jumped out and marched

purposefully to the front door. He kicked it as hard as he could. It flew open in a shower of splinters and he stepped inside.

“Mr. Saracen?!” Emily yelled out.

Lance pulled his gun and aimed it at her. She was sitting on the couch and quickly put her hands up in the air.

“Where is your husband?”

“He’s sleeping. He’s got a shift tonight so he needed to get some rest.”

Lance looked up at the stairs and then back at Emily.

“Stay quiet and stay out of the way and I won’t hurt you.”

He started walking up the stairs.

“I’m calling the cops!” Emily yelled.

Lance paused.

“You better call an ambulance too.”

He made his way to the second level and into the bedroom. Alex was asleep in the bed. Lance aimed his gun and fired. The bullet hit the wall just an inch from Alex's head. Alex sat up quickly.

“What the hell?”

“I want you to admit to me what you did to Devin Lamonte,” Lance said calmly.

“I don't know what the hell you're talking about man!”

Lance fired again, this bullet hitting even closer to Alex's head.

“Damn! Okay! She was shooting her mouth off about a cop being the Slasher. We had to teach her a lesson man, we had to. We stopped before it got too serious.”

Lance nodded, a dark sense of calm settling over him. He put his gun in his holster and motioned towards Alex with his hand.

“Come teach me a lesson,” he said.

Alex eyed him nervously for a moment, unsure of what to do. He was much bigger than Lance and as he sized him up seemed to decide to take the man up on his offer. He sprung out of the bed and charged. He was shirtless and wore only sweatpants, his muscular frame primed for a fight. Lance sidestepped the charge and hooked Alex under the arm. He used the large man’s momentum to toss him up into the large mirror that ran along the top of the couple’s chest of drawers.

The impact shattered the mirror as Alex went into it back first. He cried out in pain as

some of the shards cut into his shirtless back. He landed on his side atop the chest. Lance stood motionless, watching him, waiting for him to attack again. Alex stared at him, a blind rage overcoming him. He got to his feet and charged again, this time leading with a punch. Lance ducked the man's fist and then punched him in the front of the throat. He followed that up with a hard knee to the kidney.

Alex stumbled backwards. He was struggling to breathe but lashed out with a punch. Lance blocked it and hit the man as hard as he could on the bridge of his nose. He could feel it break beneath his fist and warm blood began gushing out immediately. Alex was back up against the chest of drawers again, holding his arms up in a defensive

position. Lance stepped towards him and let loose with a brutal front kick right to the groin. Alex fell to his knees.

Lance watched the man kneel there for a moment. He again pictured Devin getting beat down by this man and his colleagues. They hadn't stopped beating her once she went down and Lance had no intention of paying Officer Hawthorne that courtesy either. He kicked him hard in the side of the head. Alex was dazed now and unable to defend himself. Lance grabbed him by the ear and pulled hard towards the door. Alex resisted at first but Lance pulled harder and eventually the man crawled forward and allowed himself to be led.

Lance dragged him by the ear to the top of the staircase. He then pulled him up to his

feet. Alex again tried to punch him but Lance blocked it easily. He then flung Alex down the stairs as hard as he could. He watched as the man bounced and tumbled down them before coming to a sliding stop at the bottom. Emily screamed out as she saw her husband. Lance slowly walked down the stairs.

Alex was trying to crawl away. Emily was kneeling beside him, crying, trying to help him escape.

“Why are you doing this?” she shrieked.

“Ask your husband why. Ask him what he did.”

She looked at Alex.

“Tell her!” Lance screamed.

Alex crawled until he reached the kitchen counter. He sat against it, looking from his wife to Lance.

“There was someone at work, this detective. She told everyone that the Sandpoint Slasher was a cop,” Alex said.

Emily put her hand over her mouth.

“What did you do?”

“A few of the guys, we got together to teach her a lesson.”

She backed away from him.

“How could you?” she asked, more tears streaming down her face now.

Lance approached and pulled Alex to his feet.

“To be exact, they dislocated her shoulder. That goes a little something like this.”

He grabbed the officer’s arm and twisted it around. Alex cried out softly but when Lance wrenched it back as hard as he could it caused Alex to scream. A loud pop signaled the

dislocation. Lance pulled down on it once again for effect and then released it. Alex slumped back down against the counter, cradling his arm to his body.

“They also tore the ligaments in her knee. That happens kind of like this.”

Lance again pulled Alex to his feet. This time Alex tried to push him away but Lance punched him hard in the face to subdue him, and then pulled him up. He kicked Alex hard in the side of the knee, causing it to bend out unnaturally the other direction. Again the officer screamed. This time he went down hard, landing on his side on the floor.

“That’s enough!” Emily screamed.

Lance shook his head.

“You’d think so, wouldn’t you? You’d think you’d see that damage done and say

‘that’s enough’. But that wasn’t enough for your husband and his friends last night. No, they also cracked some of her ribs. I’d imagine that happened like this.”

He stomped down as hard as he could on Alex’s side. The man cried out as he rocked back and forth on the floor.

“Please! No more,” he cried.

Lance ignored him. He turned back to Emily.

“The thing about all of these injuries is that they’ll heal with time. None of them is life threatening. But a head injury, now those can be tricky. Maybe you just get a concussion, but maybe something more severe happens. Brain damage, death, those are both possibilities too.”

“No,” Emily said weakly.

He turned away and kicked Alex as hard as he could in the face. The man's head rocked back and blood and teeth flew from his mouth. The only reason Lance didn't follow it up with another kick was because he wanted the man to be able to understand what he was about to say to him. Lance got down on his knees and leaned his mouth down right next to Alex's ear.

“I know you're in a lot of pain right now but I need you to listen to me very carefully. If you ever come near her again, if you look at her wrong or even breathe in her direction, I will not only be back to kill you but I'll kill your lovely wife here too. And then I'll visit your parents at their house in Miami, and I'll stop off on the way to put a bullet in your big brother Martin's brain.”

Lance had learned these family details the night before when he had been snooping through their house. His threat had the desired effect as Alex broke into sobs.

“Do we understand one another?” Lance asked him.

The man nodded weakly.

Lance got back to his feet.

“I need you to give the other four cops that helped you a message. Can you do that for me?”

Again Alex nodded.

“I want you to tell them to drop to their knees and pray to whatever god they worship that I never discover their identities. You tell them that as soon as I finish my current investigation that I will be coming for them and that if they’re smart they’ll disappear

forever before that happens. You tell them that if they ever as much as think a negative thought about Devin Lamonte then I'll dedicate my immediate future to giving them five times the pain I gave you here today. Will you tell them that for me?"

"I will," Alex said through his sobs.

Emily had collapsed to the floor and was sobbing right along with her husband. Lance took a moment to survey the damage he had caused before leaving.

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A somber mood hung heavy in Token's house that night. Upon returning there earlier in the day Lance told Toke and Leo about

Alex Hawthorne and what he had done to the man. The three of them dug through personnel files and camera footage for a few hours in an attempt to find out who else had participated in the assault on Devin. Their frustration and anger grew as they continued to come up empty in their search.

With all of their immediate investigative options exhausted Token and Leo had turned to drinking beer and watching a basketball game. Lance remained at his computer, half heartedly continuing to dig through personnel files, hoping for some clue to leap out and grab his attention.

They continued like this for hours. A dark cloud hung over them as they sat in silence, the night crawling slowly past outside. The basketball game ended and gave way to a

sports highlights show. Lance was on his fifth read through of Sandpoint PD personnel files, his eyes barely even noting the information being displayed on his screen.

“Lucky for you boys I’m not the Slasher or you’d all be dead.”

They all turned quickly to see Devin standing behind them. They had been so wrapped up in their bad moods that they hadn’t heard her come through the front door. Token and Leo got to their feet and approached her.

“What are you doing here?” Leo asked.

She had a sling on her right arm, a heavy brace on her left knee and a large white bandage wrapped around the top of her head.

“I checked myself out.”

Lance stood and walked over. He was looking at her closely.

“I’m not so sure that was a smart idea,” he said.

Devin hated hospitals and was so glad to be free of it that she didn’t even let Lance’s comments bring her down.

“They just wanted to keep me for observation. It’s fine.”

“Come over here and sit down,” Token said, taking her by the arm.

He led her to the couch and helped ease her down onto it. She smiled up at him.

“Thank you.”

Leo was standing over her, looking down at her injuries.

“I don’t know Devin, maybe you should go back,” Leo said.

“Not you too,” she stated.

Lance had returned to his computer chair nearby but swiveled to face her.

“You got lucky to get through this with injuries that will eventually heal, Devin. But you don’t need to go around doing anything that will make them worse,” he said.

Devin shook her head.

“I can’t stay there anymore,” she paused, her mood noticeably darkening. “They keep sending people there to double check and triple check my story. Making sure that I’m not going to sue the department or reveal the true identity of my attackers.”

She shuddered as she thought about it and then shook her head again.

“No. I can’t handle their fake regret and their self serving sympathy any more. I just had to get away from it.”

Everyone was silent for a moment. She smiled, trying to lighten the mood.

“Besides. I’ve got some paid time off from work, so I can concentrate all of my efforts on the Slasher investigation.”

Leo smiled and sat down beside her. Lance looked at the personnel files on his computer screen and then back at Devin.

“Have you thought of anything that could help us identify any more of your attackers?”

“No, nothing,” she answered. “Wait. What do you mean ‘any more’? Did you find out who one of them was?”

Lance nodded.

“It was my Slasher suspect, Alex Hawthorne.”

She opened her mouth to ask a question but stopped herself. She sat for a moment and then asked something else instead.

“Should I even ask what happened to him?”

A sinister smile slowly spread across Lance’s lips.

“Probably not,” he said.

The smile on his face gave Devin chills and she looked away from him quickly.

“You want something to drink?” Toke asked her, changing the subject.

“Sure.”

Token went into the kitchen and started preparing a glass of lemonade. He had just finished pouring it and was about to take it

back into the living room when Devin came slowly shuffling into the kitchen.

“I was going to bring it to you.”

She smiled.

“I know.”

He stared at her for a long moment. He hated seeing her in such rough shape. It stirred in him a series of strong emotions, from rage for the attackers to a fierce desire to wrap his arms around her and whisper that everything was going to be okay. After another moment he sat the glass of lemonade down on the table and stepped towards her.

“Listen, why don’t you let me drive you home. I’ll stop off and get you your favorite food and I’ll just stay with you at your place and take care of you. At least until tomorrow.”

Devin's cheeks reddened slightly and she looked away from him.

“Actually, I was just coming in here to tell you that I asked Leo if he'd take me home and stay the night with me.”

Token stepped back. He felt like someone had punched him and he put his hand on the table to steady himself.

“Leo?” he muttered. “Of course it'd be Leo. Why wouldn't it be Leo?”

“Toke, come on,” Devin said.

He held up his hand and then opened the back door and went outside. Devin followed him, walking gingerly on her injured knee. Token was sitting on the bottom step of the back porch, looking out at the dark yard. She stood behind him.

“Come on Token, don't act so surprised.”

“Right, because why would you ever show an interest in a guy like me.”

“What do you expect?” Devin asked. “I mean, you call yourself Toke!”

“It’s short for Token,” he said, still staring out into the yard.

“Whatever. I’m a cop, Token. I know better than to get involved with men who give themselves nicknames based on drug use or racial stereotypes or whatever it is that you chose to call yourself that.”

She hated to hurt him but she meant what she was saying and needed him to hear it. She watched his back as he sat silently. After a long moment he reached up and removed the thin golden chain he wore around his neck. He held it up in the air, waiting for her to take it from his hand. She wasn’t sure why

he wanted her to do this but she reached out and grabbed it.

“My dad got arrested right after he got my mom pregnant,” he said, speaking in a quiet, serious tone. “She hated him for that so after I was born she never let me go see him. I remember asking all the time to go see him at the prison but she always said no. He was inside for almost nine years.”

He sat for several moments before continuing.

“When he got out he came to see me and he took me to this arcade. I had never been before, we were dirt poor, no money at all, and then all of a sudden here comes my dad and he's taking me to this place that was just magical to a kid, you know?” he laughed quietly, lost in the memory. “And he buys me

all these tokens and tells me to spend them all. I don't know where he got the money, but it was like twenty dollars worth. That pile of golden tokens, it was like a treasure to me. At first I wanted to keep all of them. He had to convince me to spend them as we went around to all of the different games in the arcade.”

He fell silent and almost a full minute passed before he spoke again.

“Even though I was just eight years old I knew that day was special, so I saved one of the tokens to remember it by. It was the best day of my life. I had my dad back and we had more fun in that one day than I had had in my whole life leading up to then.”

Devin held the necklace up into the light coming from inside the house and saw that

attached to the chain was a single golden arcade token. A lump formed in her throat and she had to blink back tears as she listened to the rest of Toke's story.

“Later that night, after he dropped me off, he went and robbed a liquor store. The cops chased him down and ended up shooting him and killing him.”

He stood up and stared into the night sky. Devin just watched him, unable to find anything to say that would express how sorry she was. Finally he turned to look at her.

“I met my dad one time in my whole life, for about six hours, and that,” he paused, pointing at the necklace, “is what I have to remember him by. That's where I get my nickname from and I couldn't be more proud of it.”

A tear rolled down her cheek as she stared at him. Her lip quivered as she again tried to find something to say. He walked up the steps and stood in front of her. He reached out for the necklace and she placed it in his hand.

“Token, I...”

Toke leaned forward and kissed her on the forehead.

“I’m so glad that you’re okay, Devin. Go home and get some rest.”

He walked past her and into the house before she could respond.

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Hours after they should've gone to bed to get some much needed rest Lance and Token sat at the kitchen table. The somber mood in the house had grown even more intense after Devin had left with Leo. Toke made a trip to replenish his stock of beer and was surprised when Lance abandoned his work on the computer to come into the kitchen to join him for a drink. The two of them chatted for some time about nothing in particular before the conversation turned to the Slasher case.

“My suspect, Danny Rudolph, he’s not the Slasher,” Token said.

“How do you know?”

“I asked him.”

Lance looked at him, a confused expression on his face.

“What do you mean you asked him?”

“Things were getting crazy inside the bank and I was tired and my adrenaline was racing and I just ended up asking him if he was the Slasher.”

Lance was smiling now as he spoke.

“You asked him if he was the Slasher?”

Token laughed as he answered.

“Yup.”

The two men broke into a fit of laughter.

Lance hit the table with his fist as he laughed.

“You just asked him!” he bellowed.

They laughed for several minutes. Both of them were exhausted, mentally and physically, and the laughter served as a badly needed release. Finally it subsided and they sat there for several moments recovering.

“He wasn’t at the gang rumble because he was with this girl at a restaurant where she

works. I called them up and confirmed that he had been there that night.”

Lance stood up and walked into the living room. He returned with a clipboard that had a piece of paper listing the remaining suspects on it. He drew a line through his own suspect, Alex Hawthorne.

“How do you know it’s not Hawthorne?”
Token asked.

“Because he was too stupid and too ill tempered to be the Slasher. If the Slasher wanted Devin punished for what she said in that meeting do you really think he would’ve gathered up a posse and beat her down outside the station? No, Hawthorne was a thug, way too small minded to be a serial killer.”

Next Lance drew a line through Token's suspect, Danny Rudolph. They looked carefully at the remaining names. They were down to just three suspects. Harriet Jeter, the woman that Devin was investigating. Dylan Kenwright, Leo's suspect. Lance paused as he read the last name, a bad feeling settling over him. Jack Tripp, the suspect he had given to Vanderbilt. He stared at the name for several moments, getting a stronger sense of dread by the second. He remembered something from that morning, something the receptionist at the station had tried to tell him when he asked for Vanderbilt.

“What is it?” Token asked, sensing that something was wrong.

“I need one of your phones,” Lance said.

Token stood up and went to a kitchen cabinet. He pulled out a cheap prepaid cell phone and tossed it to Lance. Lance dialed the police station and waited for the receptionist to answer.

“I need to speak with Vanderbilt in Internal Affairs please,” Lance said.

“I’m sorry sir, Vanderbilt hasn’t been at the station for several days now. Is there a message you’d like me to take?”

Lance hung up the phone, his bad feeling multiplying. He slid it across the table to Toke.

“Call back and ask to speak with Officer Jack Tripp,” Lance told him.

Token did as he asked and Lance could tell by the look on his face that something was wrong. He hung up and shook his head.

“She said that Tripp has been missing shifts and that he hasn’t called in or anything.”

Lance stood up, an angry feeling growing inside of him.

“What has Vanderbilt done?” he asked.

END OF EPISODE 8

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