

The logo for 'Black Badge Season Two' features the words 'BLACK BADGE' in a large, bold, black font with a white, cracked-glass texture. The letter 'O' in 'BLACK' is replaced by a black heart shape with a white, cracked-glass texture. Below this, the words 'SEASON TWO' are written in a smaller, bold, black font with the same cracked-glass texture.

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**Episode 24**

**Don't Let Me Explode**

“Okay, here’s what we’re looking at,” Token said.

He stared down at a map of San Francisco. It was spread open on the table. Lance leaned forward to get a better view.

“Sit still,” Devin fussed.

“I need to see this.”

“And I need to finish stitching you up. You’re no good to us if you’re dead, understand? This wound might be infected already.”

Lance was sitting on the edge of the bed, his shirt off. His battered body looked like that of a corpse. Knife wounds, gunshot wounds, a bruise down his right side and a gash on his forehead where he’d been cut were just the most visible of his many injuries. Devin didn’t even understand how he was staying conscious at this point as she continued to do her best tending to his wounds.

“The first man we tracked returned to Hotel Vitale,” Token said, circling its location on the map. “The second man went to the luxurious Five Diamond, and the third went to Hotel Griffon. These are all five star hotels right along the San Francisco Bay. There are four more five star hotels within a two block radius, so the assumption is that the rest of the surviving Black Badge founders are staying in those hotels.”

“That puts them all within a mile, mile and a half of each other,” Lance said.

“Murray, what’s the proposed radius of the explosives that Clyde stole?”

“Enough to take out all of those hotels, maybe even more of the area.”

Toke tapped the map.

“That puts the Bay Bridge into play,” he said. “The bastard’s gonna gut the harbor and take out the bridge at the same time.”

Lance leaned forward again. This time Devin didn’t fight him. He looked over the map for several long moments.

“So the bomb has to be within a few miles of the hotels,” Lance said. “It’s not much, but at least we know where to search now.”

The sun was just peeking over the horizon, sending the first rays of sunshine through the motel room window.

“We only have about four and a half hours to pull this off,” Devin said.

“So we’re just gonna go looking for the bomb?” Token asked.

“It’s all we can do at this point,” Lance said. “The cops are after us, the Black Badge founders are after us, and the government agencies can’t act fast enough to help. Our only hope is finding the bomb.”

Lance stood up and limped over to the map. He pointed at the Hotel Vitale.

“I’ll take the area north of Vitale, Devin, you work out to the west, Token will look to the south and Murray can see if there’s anything along the shoreline to the east.”

“No way are you splitting us up like that,” Devin said. “You’re dead on your feet and Murray doesn’t know the first thing about avoiding the cops.”

She approached the map and pointed at it.

“You and I will take the north and west, and Token and Murray can take south and east.”

Lance didn’t have the energy to argue. He simply nodded.

“Good, now let’s get out there,” Devin said.

Murray was first out the door, followed by Lance. Devin grabbed Toke’s arm and stopped him as he walked past.

“If we come up empty handed out there and it’s getting close to time for Clyde’s attack, promise me you’ll get my brother a safe distance away.”

Token nodded.

“You have my word.”

She offered him a slight smile.

“Thank you.”

Token patted her on the back.

“Good luck out there,” he said.

She nodded and watched him walk out the door.

“You too,” she called out.

When she got outside, Lance was already sitting in the car waiting on her. She settled in behind the wheel and took them towards Hotel Vitale.

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Lance collapsed onto the bench. He was drenched in sweat and breathing heavily.

“Two hours,” he wheezed.

“Just catch your breath,” Devin said.

“Two hours and nothing to show for it!” Lance yelled. “We’re failing.”

Basements, attics, alleyways, suspicious vehicles, they’d searched them all and come up empty.

“Let me call Token again, maybe they’ve had some luck,” Devin said.

She pulled out her cell phone and dialed his number.

“Please tell me you guys have something,” Devin said.

“Nothing. We’re checking everywhere, taking too many damn chances considering the entire city knows our faces. But there’s nothing here at...”

A fog horn blared out from the bay, obscuring Toke’s sentence.

“Hold on, I can’t hear you,” Devin shouted into the phone. “There’s a ship coming into the harbor.”

An idea zipped through her like electricity. She looked over at Lance just as he stood up, a new fire burning in his eyes. He’d thought of it too.

“The ships,” Devin said into the phone. “We’re going to check into any suspicious ships in the harbor. You and Murray keep searching on land.”

She hung up and they hurried over to their car. Devin sped towards the docks.

“Do you think he’d have it on a boat?” Devin asked.

“There’s a million places he could have the bomb. But a ship keeps it mobile, keeps anyone from happening upon it before it blows. So yeah, it’s a possibility.”

Devin frowned. She was hoping for a more optimistic answer.

“If we’re wrong, this is the last hunch we’re going to have time to look into,” she said. “After this it’s all over.”

Lance didn’t respond. They drove to the docks in silence. The harbor was bustling

with activity. Devin pointed to a building right on the water.

“There’s the harbormaster.”

She parked the car and they walked up to the building. Lance pulled his pistol out.

“Whoa, what are you doing?” Devin asked.

“We don’t have time for the subtle approach.”

“Lance, wait...”

He kicked the door, splintering the frame and sending it flying open. Lance stepped inside and pointed the gun at an older gentlemen sitting behind a large desk. The man started to reach for something.

“Don’t do it,” Lance commanded.

The man relaxed his arms. Devin came inside and closed the door back as best as she could.

“What do you want?” the harbormaster asked.

“What ships are coming in today?” Lance asked.

The man slid an open ledger across the desk.

“See for yourself.”

Lance picked up the ledger and flung it into the wall.

“I’m talking about off book arrivals,” Lance said.

“I don’t run that kind of operation here.”

“Bullshit!” Lance shouted.

He swept everything off of the cluttered desk and then stalked around it. He shoved the gun into the side of the man’s head, digging it into his skin.

“Tell me what I want to know or I will pull this trigger.”

“I don’t run off book arrivals here,” the man repeated.

Lance pulled the gun back slightly.

“Look at me,” he commanded.

The man turned to stare up at Lance.

“I’ve killed thirteen people in the past eight hours. Do I look like the kind of man who would hesitate to make that number fourteen?”

The harbormaster stared at him for a long moment, his eyes wide. Finally he looked down at the floor.

“There are three ships coming in today that aren’t on my ledger,” he said.

“Details,” Lance demanded.

The harbormaster pulled out a sheet of folded paper from his front pocket. He

unfolded it and read.

“The first is an unregistered fishing boat, probably coming up from Mexico. The second is a yacht, maybe someone who’s wanted by the authorities, I don’t ask those kinds of questions. And the third is a retro-fitted oil tanker.”

“An oil tanker? Is that common?” Lance asked.

“Not really. Could be smugglers, though. They should be here in a couple of hours.”

Lance snatched the sheet of paper from the man, then studied the other surfaces in the room. He saw some family photographs on a nearby shelf.

“Give me your wallet,” Lance said.

The harbormaster did as he was told. Lance pulled out the man’s driver’s license.

“Now I know where you live,” Lance said, then pointed at the photographs, “and I know what your family looks like.”

“Leave them out of this!” the man yelled.

“I will, if you do exactly as I say. You’re going to provide us with a small boat, and then you’re going to forget you ever met us. You tell one soul, you mention this to a single incoming ship, and you and your family are dead.”

He paused to let his words sink in.

“Do we understand one another?” Lance asked.

The harbormaster nodded bitterly.

“We do.”

He reached into the desk and pulled out a set of keys.

“Dock 23 has several craft that we’re storing. Take your pick, I’ll report it as stolen tomorrow.”

Lance took the keys and backed out the door. He saw dock 23 in the distance and started walking to it. He could feel Devin glaring at him.

“Did you forget what I am, Devin?”

“Did you? We agreed to try to do the right thing for once, to stop Clyde.”

“That’s exactly what we’re doing,” Lance said. “Trying to stop Clyde.”

“We’re doing it by holding a gun to an old man’s head and threatening his family? Is that what we’ve become?”

“Don’t be naïve, it’s not what we’ve become. It’s what we already were.”

Devin shook her head.

“No, dammit. It doesn’t have to be that way.”

Lance clenched and unclenched his fists.

“It’s the only way I’ve ever known,” he said.

They arrived at dock 23 and he moved to a small blue speed boat. Devin untied it from the dock while Lance started trying the keys in the ignition. The ninth key he tried fit and the engine roared to life. He handed the folded up sheet of paper to Devin.

“Guide us to it,” he said.

He took the boat into the harbor, keeping the speed down until they were in open waters. Devin studied the paper. It detailed the paths the three off book ships would be taking into the harbor. As soon as they were out of the harbor and into the Pacific they saw the oil tanker. Devin read the hull markings of the tanker, then compared them to the paper.

“That’s the one,” she said.

Lance cut a wide path around it and then approached from behind. He matched speeds and brought them up against the hull of the tanker. Devin reached out and tied them to the boarding ladder. Once their speed boat was secure, they climbed up the ladder and onto the deck of the tanker.

Neither was sure what to expect, but the deafening silence and stillness was a surprise to both. They crept down the deck slowly with guns drawn, the eerie feeling growing the further they went.

“Where the hell is everybody?” Devin asked quietly.

A large steel door hung slightly open. Lance gestured towards it with his pistol, then the two made their way to it. He pushed it open. Inside was a set of metal stairs that led deep into the bowels of the ship.

Lance stepped away from the door. Something didn’t feel right. Devin went inside and down a few of the stairs. She squinted into the darkness and finally saw where they ended.

“Should we check it out or stay topside?” Devin asked.

Lance turned towards her but didn’t immediately answer. He was trying to decipher the bad feeling spreading through his body. Devin looked back at him to see why he wasn’t answering. Her eyes went wide.

“Look out!” she yelled.

Lance turned around to see Clyde standing behind him. Clyde hit Lance in the face with the butt of his combat rifle. Lance stumbled through the door and fell backwards onto the stairs. Devin tried to grab him as he tumbled past but she was a second too

slow. Clyde slammed and locked the metal door, sealing them in.

Cries of pain and the repeated sound of flesh upon metal rang out in the cavernous room as Lance tumbled all the way down the stairs. He came to a stop with a low thud at the base of the steps.

Devin rushed down after him.

“Lance!” she yelled.

When she got near the final stairs she stopped and covered her mouth. Lance was unconscious, lying on his back on the metal floor with his left leg broken and folded up underneath his body at a sickening angle. His face had fresh cuts and scrapes, and blood flowed from countless different wounds.

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Devin cradled Lance’s head in her lap. She did the best she could to stop the bleeding from his many wounds, but his breathing remained uneven and he was still unconscious. She kept his head steady, unsure if he had a spinal injury or not. The hold of the ship was barely lit, and the brightest light came from her cell phone. She held it up in the air, trying anything to get a signal.

“Dammit,” she yelled, throwing her cell phone down and shattering it.

Lance stirred. A low moan passed his lips. It was the first noise he’d made since the fall.

“Lance? Lance, are you with me?”

She could see his eyeballs moving behind his eyelids.

“Lance. If you can hear me, say something.”

His eyes blinked open for a moment, then closed back.

“How bad?” he asked, his voice a raspy whisper.

“Let’s just say you outdid yourself this time.”

His eyes opened again. They looked glassy and unfocused.

“How long have we been down here?”

Devin looked down and frowned at her broken phone.

“A little over an hour, I think.”

“What?!”

Lance tried to sit up but Devin held him down.

“Your spine might be cracked, you can’t just jump up,” Devin said.

“We’re almost out of time,” Lance said, his voice more scared and desperate than ever before.

Devin calculated it in her head quickly. He was right, their window to stop Clyde was nearly shut. Lance stopped fighting against her and settled back, his eyes sliding closed again.

“How did we get here?” Lance asked.

Memory loss wasn’t uncommon after a fall like the one he took, so Devin didn’t let the question worry her.

“We took a boat and...”

“No, I know that,” Lance interrupted. “I mean how did we get... here.”

He swept his hand out to emphasize the last word. Devin looked out into the dark interior of the ship and smiled sadly.

“Bad life choices, I guess,” she said, only half joking.

Lance let out a deep sigh.

“I never had a choice.”

She sat and waited, wondering if he was going to explain. After over a minute of silence, he continued.

“I was twelve when I killed my first dirty cop, did you know that?”

Devin swallowed hard, unsure if she was ready to hear what he had to say.

“The file I pulled six months ago in Sandpoint, the one about Edison Ellis, it mentioned it,” she said.

“No one ever called me Edison. Ed was what the neighborhood kids called me.”

“What about your parents?” Devin asked, afraid she was bringing up a subject he’d rather not talk about.

“My mom died when I was a baby and my dad was a junkie. They never really called me anything. I spent all of my time with my Uncle. Uncle Robert was the only decent man in my life. He ran a little store in the neighborhood. He was kind and fair. A lot of people where we lived didn’t have much money, and Uncle Robert would let them trade for food, or he’d let them take some groceries and pay later.”

Lance smiled.

“I grew up in that store. I’d work all day long there, just so I could be around my Uncle. It was the only peace I knew.”

The smile faded.

“Then one day this cop started coming around. He was this big, mean son of a bitch,

one of those cops that thought the badge gave him the right to say or do anything he pleased. At first it was just once a month, he'd show up and break a few things, trying to scare my uncle, but after that it got worse."

He was breathing heavier now. Devin felt of his pulse. It was racing.

"Lance, you don't have to tell me all of this. You should rest."

"Please, just listen. In case this is it, I want someone to know. At least one person."

Devin realized what he was saying. He'd never told anyone what he was telling her now.

"The cop started coming in several times a week, just wrecking the store. He demanded protection money, but my Uncle refused to pay up. The store barely made any money as it was, Uncle Robert was drowning in debt and every month was a struggle just to keep it open. But this cop didn't care about that, he didn't care about all of the people that my Uncle helped."

He paused for a moment. His chest was heaving as he took several angry breaths.

"When the cop finally got it through his thick skull that my Uncle wasn't going to pay up, he got violent. I don't know if he came there that night just to scare my Uncle, or if his intention was murder, but he beat Uncle Robert to death there, right in the middle of the store. I was hiding in the back, and I just sat there and watched it happen. This monster, destroying the only good thing in my life, for no damn reason whatsoever."

Lance held up his hand. It was shaking.

"I remember my whole body was shaking. I don't know if it was rage or shame that I hadn't helped, or maybe shock, but I couldn't stop the shaking. The cop took what little money was in the register, then left. The bastard even took the time to flip the sign to show that the store was closed."

He opened his eyes, but stared up into the darkness.

"After that, you probably know as much as I do. I remember going after him, but my next memory is getting dragged away by the police. They said that I beat him to death with a rock. I saw pictures once, his head was almost completely flat. I must've crushed that rock down into his face a hundred times."

He fell silent. After over a minute passed, Devin spoke.

"That's what qualified you to be a Black Badge. Killing a dirty cop."

"They came for me on my thirteenth birthday. I was in juvie, and they set it all up, the guards were in on it. They faked my suicide and hauled me off to the Black Badge

training facility.”

“You were still just a kid,” Devin said.

“Taking a life accelerates the growth process. Truth is, I didn’t care who was taking me where, or what they wanted me to do. With Uncle Robert gone, I’d lost my last real connection to my life. I was all too happy to throw myself into their sadistic training. Seven years I spent training to be a Black Badge, then a decade of doing the job.”

“My God, Lance, you’ve spent more years as a Black Badge than you did as a regular kid.”

“I barely remember life without it. It feels like it’s been my entire existence.”

Devin nodded. She finally understood why he was so committed to the dark ways of his organization, and why learning the truth about them had been so hard for him.

Lance focused his eyes on her for the first time since regaining consciousness.

“But I’ll be damned if I let my time as a Black Badge be the only thing that defines my life. Help me up and let’s stop Clyde.”

“Lance, your leg is shattered, your whole body is wrecked, I don’t know what you want me to do here.”

The familiar intensity appeared in his eyes.

“Then we splint the leg. My body can be wrecked later, for now I just need to be able to stand and hold a gun.”

“Lance…”

“Find something, Devin. A pipe, anything. Get me on my feet.”

“You really think we can still do this?” she asked.

“We’re sure as hell going to try.”

Devin stood, leaving him lying on the metal floor as she searched the nearby area.

“I found your gun,” she said a few moments later.

Lance listened as her footsteps faded into the darkness. He used his hands to push himself up into a sitting position. Every movement caused ripples of agony to run through him. He scooted back and leaned against the wall. The effort brought lines of sweat running down his face.

Devin returned with several items. A metal piece of railing that was about three feet long, and two pieces of scrap metal.

“We can splint with the scrap metal and you can use the long piece as a crutch.”

Lance nodded, knowing that what came next was going to be hell.

“Do it,” he said.

Devin removed her overshirt, revealing a white tank-top underneath. She tore the overshirt into several strips of cloth, then positioned the sheet metal on each side of Lance's broken leg. She looked at him and he nodded.

She wrapped the strips of cloth around his leg and the metal, pulling it as tight as she could. Lance pulled his shirt into his mouth and bit down on it, the excruciating pain too much even for him. Tears streamed from the corners of his eyes as Devin tied off the strips of fabric, securing the metal to his shattered leg.

After what felt to him like an eternity, she was done. She didn't say anything for several minutes, giving him time to recover.

"Help me up."

Devin pulled him to his feet, trying her best to make it painless for him. Lance cringed as he put weight on his broken leg, but was able to stand. He leaned heavily on the metal bar.

"You got it?" Devin asked, fearful of turning loose of him.

Lance nodded.

"I'm good."

The scraping of metal on metal rang out from the top of the staircase.

"The door!" Devin hissed.

She pulled her gun and moved around behind the staircase. Lance was much slower, and arrived beside her just as the door opened. Sunlight streamed in, and they could see someone's shadow. The person closed the door back, then started slowly down the steps.

Devin and Lance had their pistols aimed forward, ready to empty their clips into Clyde's back. But the figure that appeared wasn't Clyde.

"Token!" Devin yelled out.

He jumped, then whirled around, shotgun aimed right at them. Devin rushed out from behind the stairs and hugged him tight.

"I didn't know if you'd find us in time."

He smiled, enjoying the feeling of her against him.

"When I couldn't reach either of you I headed to the docks. You two did quite a number on that harbormaster, but he ended up telling me what I needed to know."

Lance hobbled out from behind the steps.

"Damn!" Toke said, biting his fist. "You look like a zombie."

Lance smiled slightly.

“Good to see you too.”

“Let’s get up there and end this,” Devin said, stepping onto the stairs.

“You can’t go that way,” Token said. “Clyde’s up on the bridge and has a perfect view of that door. I’ve been out there for twenty minutes waiting for him to look away long enough for me to sneak in.”

Token pointed into the darkened hold.

“There are other doors on the deck of the ship. Maybe we can reach one by going through here.”

“Let’s do it then,” Devin said.

Token looked at Lance and frowned. He’d never seen a man in such rough shape.

“We don’t have much time,” Token said.

“I won’t slow you down. Just lead the way,” Lance said.

Token nodded and headed off into the dimly lit hold. Devin stayed right beside him.

“Where’s Murray?” she asked.

“Safe, just like I promised. He’s back in the motel on the other side of the city, waiting on our call. He wasn’t exactly happy that you benched him right when the game was on the line.”

“I don’t care, I just want him to be safe.”

Distant hushed voices came from somewhere ahead and the three of them stopped.

“Is it Clyde?” Token whispered.

Lance listened for several moments, then shook his head.

“Someone else. Sounds like several people.”

They moved more slowly now, weapons at the ready. As they continued on the voices grew louder and a terrible stench filled the air. It was a smell that all three had become far too familiar with; the smell of death.

The hold narrowed into a hallway and there was a room to the left. They could hear people in there talking. Two metal crates were stacked in front of the door, pinning it shut. Token and Devin struggled to move them, but finally got them slid far enough out that they could pull the door open.

Fourteen grimy and scared men were gathered against the far wall. They eyed the guns with fear and muttered in a foreign language. Devin lowered her pistol.

“We’re not here to hurt you,” she said.

A few of the men stepped closer, their mutterings growing to loud pleas.

“I don’t understand, do any of you speak English?”

One man stepped forward. He had a heavy beard and looked like he'd lived his entire life on the seas.

"I am Djovic, second mate."

Devin smiled, doing her best to appear reassuring.

"Djovic, my name is Devin. We're here to stop a man who is on your ship."

Djovic spit into the floor.

"That man say he pay us many dollars for using our ship, but he killed many of crew, killed our Captain. He made us to work, then when ship on course he killed many and locked us away."

He pointed to the far corner of the room where a pile of bodies laid. Devin turned to look at Lance. He nodded, and she turned back to Djovic.

"We're going to get you out of here, but you have to do exactly as I say, do you understand?" Devin said.

Djovic nodded.

"Translate this to your men. Stay silent and follow us. When we get outside, I'll lead you to our boats and get you to safety."

The man repeated her instructions in his own language, then nodded.

"We are ready."

"If we continue this direction, is there another way up to the deck?" Token asked.

Djovic nodded.

"Yes, door opens just below bridge."

"Shit, Clyde's on the bridge," Toke said.

"He shouldn't be watching this door, though," Devin said. "We have to chance it."

With Djovic directing them, they made it to the other side of the ship in just a few minutes. They found themselves at the base of a metal staircase identical to the one on the other side of the hold. Devin led them upwards. She turned the handle on the door slowly and deliberately, keeping the noise to a minimum. It clicked open and she turned to look at everyone gathered behind her.

"You and Token take the men to safety in the boats," Lance said. "I'll deal with Clyde."

"You're in no shape to go toe to toe with him," Devin said. "You should go with Djovic and the others."

Even in the dim light she could see his stare burning a hole through her.

"Leave Clyde to me. Save these men's lives and then get clear of this boat and the

harbor.”

Devin looked to Token, hoping for some help in the argument.

“We’re wasting time that we can’t afford to lose,” he said. “Let’s just do what he says.”

Djovic grabbed Lance’s arm.

“You will make this man suffer for what he’s done?” he asked.

Lance looked the man in the eye and nodded.

“I will.”

Devin pushed the door open gently. Once there was enough room for her to slide out she stopped, leaving it mostly closed. Token and Lance followed next, then the captured sailors started filing out. Devin directed the men to the boarding ladder where the boats were tethered while Lance and Token stared up at the bridge, looking for any signs of Clyde.

Lance turned his head slightly and saw the San Francisco harbor looming large.

“We’re almost out of time,” he said quietly.

When most of the men were out of the door, Token handed his shotgun to Lance.

“Give him hell,” Toke said.

He turned to go towards the boat when a loud creaking sounded from behind him. The last sailor had tripped and hit the door, sending it sliding open all the way. It scraped against the deck and a metallic whine reverberated off the deck.

Clyde appeared above them, a combat rifle in his hands. He leaned over the railing around the bridge and opened fire on the fleeing sailors, shooting down three of them within seconds. Devin and Lance returned fire, forcing Clyde to take cover.

“Hurry!” Devin yelled. “Get to the boats!”

The rest of the men sprinted for the side of the ship and leapt overboard, leaving just Devin, Toke and Lance.

“You two go,” Lance commanded.

“But...” Devin started to argue.

“GO!” Lance yelled.

He limped out into the open and fired again and again up towards Clyde, keeping him pinned down. Token ran for the side, grabbing Devin as he passed.

“Come on,” he said.

The two of them ran for the rail and then disappeared over the side. Lance ducked back behind cover and checked the ammo remaining in the shotgun.

“You sent them away?” Clyde called out from above. “Good, now it’s just family.”

Lance peeked out and saw that the only way up to the bridge was a metal ladder. He knew he’d be an easy target trying to climb it with a broken leg.

“What’s the matter, brother? Don’t want to talk?” Clyde yelled.

Lance fired twice with the shotgun, just to shut Clyde up. He had little chance of hitting him from down on the deck. Until they were on the same level, Clyde had the upper hand.

Looking around, Lance saw a group of crates with a large net over them towards the rear of the boat. He couldn’t carry the crutch and the shotgun, so he left the shotgun and broke from cover, each step on his broken leg feeling like a touch of death. Clyde opened fire, his shots narrowly missing as Lance dove behind the crates.

Lance was breathing heavily. The short run had taken almost all of his remaining strength. He sat with his back to the crates, hoping his desperate plan was going to work.

“You realize I’m in no hurry, right?” Clyde yelled. “I’ve got a bomb up here that’s going to put a hole in the world. Either you come out and I can shoot you, or we’ll stay where we are and the bomb’ll get you.”

“Oh I think you’ll come for me before that,” Lance said. “You don’t want to die.”  
Clyde laughed.

“Is that so?”

Lance hoped it was. He fell silent and waited.

“Come on damn you!” Clyde roared. “Face me like a man!”

Lance smiled. Clyde was getting desperate.

“You chased me clear across the country, and now you’re just going to hide and get yourself blown up?” Clyde taunted.

His words fell on deaf ears. Lance was calm, ready to spring into action whenever Clyde’s patience ran out.

“COME ON!” Clyde screamed.

When Lance still didn’t respond, Clyde started climbing down the metal ladder. He dropped to the deck, keeping the combat rifle aimed squarely on the crates. He was prepared for Lance to pop out from either side. He shuffled forward, his aim never wavering. Once he reached the crates he stopped. Coming down from the bridge was risk enough, but if he came around the wrong side of the crates he could take a bullet right in the face.

“It’s over, Lance. Step out and die with dignity.”

Clyde waited a few moments, then jumped around the corner of the crate, ready to fire. There was no one there.

“What?” Clyde muttered.

He turned in a slow circle. When his back was to the railing Lance appeared. His arm was quivering as he hung off the side of the boat. He shook as he pulled himself up with one hand, the other gripping his pistol. When he was high enough, Lance brought the gun up. It hit the rail, and Clyde spun around. Clyde dove as Lance pulled the trigger. The bullet meant for his head caught him in the upper chest instead.

Lance’s grip started to falter and he slipped down. He released his pistol, sending it clattering to the deck, so he could grab the rail with his other hand. He gritted his teeth as he pulled himself back up. He got his torso over the rail and reached for his pistol.

Clyde was back on his feet and he rushed forward. He kicked Lance in the side of the head, sending him flipping over the rail and onto his back on the deck. Lance reached for his gun but Clyde kicked it away.

“Maybe it was always meant to end this way, the two sons dying as they take down their abusive fathers,” Clyde said as he stood over Lance. “I think it’s better like this, don’t you brother?”

Lance threw a punch but Clyde easily blocked it. He kicked Lance in the head, then grabbed him by the shirt and pulled him to his feet.

“Don’t be ungrateful, I’m letting you in on my crowning achievement,” Clyde said.

“Screw you,” Lance spat.

Clyde threw Lance to the deck, sending him tumbling away. Lance slid to a stop on his belly. About fifteen feet away he saw Token’s shotgun. He started crawling towards it, having to slither on his stomach to avoid putting weight on his broken leg. He could hear Clyde coming towards him, so he pushed himself up. Standing without a crutch meant using the leg, and Lance screamed out as he put enough weight on it to get to his feet.

Clyde kicked him in his broken leg, dropping Lance like a dead weight. His muscles started to convulse, as if his body was willing him to stay down and give up. He lay on his back shaking, but finally rolled over onto his stomach and started inching towards the shotgun again.

“My God, you are a determined bastard, aren’t you?” Clyde said as he watched in amusement.

He walked slowly around Lance, then stomped as hard as he could on Lance's broken leg.

"AHH!" Lance screamed.

He slammed his fists into the deck of the boat, the pain exceeding that which he thought was possible. Tears flowed from his eyes and he couldn't even produce a thought, his whole body burning with hellish agony.

"That stopped you," Clyde said with a smile. "How about we try it again?"

He raised his leg. As he brought it down for another crushing blow, gunshots rang out. Clyde ducked and looked around for the shooter. His eyes settled on Devin, charging from the far side of the ship. She kept shooting and Clyde was forced to flee, running for cover. Bullets hit all around him as he sprinted away, disappearing behind some barrels a hundred feet away.

Devin ran to Lance and knelt beside him.

"I told you to go," he said.

She gave him a smile.

"Yeah well, you're not the boss of me."

She checked his leg and frowned. Clyde had driven the sheet metal splint into the flesh. Fresh blood was soaking through Lance's pant leg.

"Your leg's completely mangled. Keep it still and I'll get Clyde."

"No Devin, you have to turn the ship around."

"But Clyde..."

"Clyde's mine. I'm not out of this fight yet. Get the ship headed back out into open waters, then get off."

"You can't beat him, Lance, I'm sorry, but you just can't, you're too messed up."

"Then it's my fight to lose," Lance said. "Promise me Devin, promise me you'll turn the ship and then get out of here."

She looked up at the bridge, then back at Lance. She was clearly conflicted about what to do.

"You're not dying for this man!" Lance yelled. "You're not dying because of the Black Badge organization, and the sadistic sons of bitches who run it."

He forced himself up into a sitting position.

"Turn the ship around, then get clear. Promise me."

She stared at him for a long moment, then nodded.

"I promise."

Lance pointed at the bridge.

“Go, there’s not much time.”

Devin handed him her pistol, then stood and ran for the metal ladder leading up to the bridge. She disappeared from view, and a minute later the ship started to turn away from the harbor.

Clyde immediately stepped from behind his hiding place.

“No!” he screamed.

Lance shot at him, pinning him down and keeping him from going for the bridge. Every time Clyde tried to make a move, Lance shot again and forced him back. Before long the ship was heading back towards the open ocean. Devin slid down the ladder and ran for the rail. She paused and looked back at Lance, giving him a confident nod before she disappeared over the side of the ship.

Clyde tried to break from cover once more. Lance aimed and squeezed the trigger, but the gun was out of bullets. Clyde smiled as he ran, realizing he was no longer in danger.

Lance dropped the gun and focused straight ahead, his eyes again locked on Token’s shotgun. He clawed at the deck, dragging himself forward. His broken leg was numb now, just a dead weight he dragged behind him. He could hear Clyde scrambling up the ladder towards the bridge and knew he had to hurry.

His fingers closed around the shotgun. Lance used it as a crutch, pushing it down into the deck as he got to his feet. His broken leg was completely useless now and he teetered for a moment, almost losing his balance. He hopped towards the metal ladder leading up to the bridge. He pushed the shotgun into the waistband of his pants, then gripped the bottom rung and hopped up.

The problem was no longer the pain in his leg, but the lack of strength left in his arms. His body had been through hell, and nothing wanted to work like it was supposed to. His grip faltered, his muscles quaked, sweat and blood poured out of him, but still he climbed. Nothing else remained inside of him, nothing but the drive to keep climbing.

Lance could feel the ship starting to turn back towards the harbor. He pulled himself up onto the final rung of the ladder and gripped the railing around the bridge. The door to the bridge was open and he could see Clyde inside at the controls. Lance held onto the rail with one hand, and pulled the shotgun out with the other. He exhaled to steady his aim, then squeezed the trigger.

The blast ripped into Clyde’s stomach and he pitched into the wall, then collapsed

into the floor. Lance pulled himself over the rail, his broken leg flopping over awkwardly. He limped forward onto the bridge. He kept the shotgun pointed at Clyde, but as he neared he realized it wasn't necessary.

Clyde was huddled against the wall of the bridge, both hands clutching his stomach. Blood oozed out from under his hands, and his shirt was soaked a dark red color. His breathing was shallow and erratic.

Lance moved to the controls. He got the ship righted and checked the position. They were almost out of the bay area, less than a minute away from returning to the open waters of the ocean.

The bomb was on the bridge too, and Lance looked it over quickly. It was a complex mechanism, and he knew he'd never be able to disarm it in time.

"At least we'll die together," Clyde wheezed. "There's not much time now."

Lance shook his head as he turned to face the American Terrorist for the last time.

"No, I'm not going to die here."

Lance turned to leave.

"Good call, brother. We'll live to fight another day."

Clyde pulled at the edge of a computer console, trying to get onto his feet. Lance looked over his shoulder.

"No more fighting," Lance said. "It's over."

Clyde used the console to get to his feet. More blood pumped from his stomach wound, but he smiled as he stood and faced Lance.

"I'll get off this ship before the bomb does and you won't," Clyde said. "I've still got two working legs."

Lance aimed the shotgun for Clyde's left knee and pulled the trigger. The blast obliterated his knee and sent Clyde back to the floor. He wailed as he touched the place where his knee used to sit, finding nothing but a bloody mess. Lance shifted his aim and fired again, destroying Clyde's right knee as well. The blast almost severed his entire lower leg.

"You'll stay and die by your own hand, experiencing the pain you so gladly wanted to bring to thousands of innocent people," Lance said.

The shotgun was empty and he threw it onto the floor, then hobbled off the bridge. He got back to the ladder, but found his fingers barely able to hold on. He hopped down two rungs before his grip gave out. He dropped to the deck below, taking the brunt of the impact on his broken leg. Lance collapsed.

The numbness in the leg was gone, replaced by complete and total torment. Lance could barely breathe, could barely see through the tears in his eyes, but he reached out, searching for the ladder. His fingers closed around one of the rungs and Lance pulled. He focused all of the pain, all of the anguish, all of the torment into that one action. His arms were like rubber, but somehow he was able to drag himself up to his feet.

Lance looked at the side of the boat. It was fifty feet away, but it looked like miles. He limped towards it, every step uneasy and off balance. He almost fell, and had to stop for a moment to right himself, burning seconds he knew he didn't have. But he continued on, continued moving forward, because that's what he always did. He worked through the agony and kept pushing himself on.

His fingers gripped the rail and he could see open water below when the bomb exploded.

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Devin, Token and Murray stood on the shore and watched the spectacle unfolding out on the water. Crafts from the Coast Guard, fire department and several other entities were gathered around the scene of the explosion. There was little left of the oil tanker, most of the ship was either obliterated or sunk.

They watched in silence, as they had for almost an hour, before Devin spoke.

"Surely they'd announce it if they found any survivors," she said.

Token pulled out his phone.

"I'll call the police department, see if they're giving out any information."

He dialed the number and then spoke briefly to someone at the station. He shook his head as he hung up.

"The official stance is that no information will be given out while the investigation is ongoing."

Devin turned to her brother.

"Can't you call someone, Murray? Someone that might know if they've found any survivors."

He pulled out his cell phone and bit his lip. He thought for several moments, then nodded.

"Let me see what I can do."

He wandered away as he spoke to someone on the phone. Devin and Toke watched

the ships while they waited. Murray hung up his phone as he returned. Devin looked at him anxiously.

“They’re going to do what they can and call me back. It could be a while.”

Devin nodded, then sat on the ground.

“Then we’ll wait.”

They all sat, their eyes on the ocean as they waited for Murray’s contact to get in touch. The sun made its way across the sky, and as it dipped towards the horizon they still knew nothing. Token stood up and stretched, then returned to the ground beside Devin. The number of ships still gathered in the water slowly dwindled until it was just a few Coast Guard boats remaining.

As the sun disappeared behind the horizon, Murray’s cell phone rang. He answered it and listened intently, then hung up.

“Well?” Devin asked.

“The Coast Guard reported no survivors. They found a few bodies, but the descriptions are all of foreign sailors, probably the dead crew members you saw down in the hold.”

“Nothing about Lance? Not even a possibility?”

Murray slowly shook his head.

“I’m sorry Devin, they didn’t find anything, and it sounds like they’re done searching for survivors.”

No one said anything for several minutes. Devin got to her feet as the last rays of sunlight disappeared. Token stood up and looked at her.

“What do you want to do?” Toke asked.

Devin stared out at the dark water for several moments before answering.

“Let’s go back to Sandpoint.”

“Our old lives are dead, Devin, you know that.”

She nodded slowly, then reached out and took his hand in hers.

“Then let’s make new ones.”

End of Season Two

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