

Safety Net

Jane x Lisbon

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They had fought. Again.

And yet she couldn't help worrying about him. He had hidden in his attic the whole day, not even caring for tea once. It was unusual and alarming.

Two weeks had gone by since Red John had changed the rules. During these two weeks Jane and Lisbon had been on the edge. Continuously. And they had fought whenever they had been alone. Jane needed things done his way, but she couldn't ignore who she was either. She was a cop, she had her own rules to follow, especially now with seven suspects left. They had to be careful, yes, but they couldn't possibly do this all on their own.

Jane disagreed. Naturally so.

Lisbon sighed in defeat, her fingertips drumming restlessly on the smooth surface of her desk. She felt nervous energy roaming through her body, something that had been her constant companion lately – every single time when Jane was out of her sight. Him snapping at her hurt pretty much, but the anxiety she felt over his absence was even worse. So finally she swallowed her pride and allowed the affection for her consultant to gain the upper hand all over again. What was one more time?

With a look through the blinds she made sure that her team had left for the day before she got up and headed for the stairs.

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The scene unfolding in front of her in that dusty CBI attic had fueled her worry even more. Motionless Jane had been standing by the window, staring outside without blinking, his face white as a sheet and with his fingers balled to fists while his clothes had looked rumpled and the blond curls of his like a ruffled mess from clenching. One glance in his eyes, blank with underlying panic that just waited to break free with full force, had been enough for Lisbon to make a decision.

"Come on, Jane," she had said with persistence in her calm voice, daring him to object, but he hadn't even flinched when she had grabbed his arm and dragged him with her.

"Where are we going?" Even though he had managed to voice the question per whispering, she could tell that he hadn't cared at all.

So she had only answered vaguely, "Getting some fresh air."

And that was how it came that she was driving her car on a road straight out of the city. Jane in the passenger seat was staring vacantly into space, seeming to see nothing of the countryside becoming more and more rural.

She stopped the car near grassland – withered by the summer heat, but with a hill promising a nice view over the area. It was the place where Lisbon was guiding her consultant to.

Up on the hill stood a huge oak tree, protecting an old picnic table and two benches from the California sun when it was high in the sky. Now with the sun setting, the leaves showed a pretty play with rays of light while swaying softly in the wind. Jane barely acknowledged his peaceful surroundings and heavily sat down on one of the benches, resting his elbows tiredly on his thighs.

Meanwhile Lisbon felt a whiff of rebellion and lowered herself on the table and her feet on the seat beside him. Giving them time to collect themselves, she let her gaze wander and breathed in the cooling air. The valley seemed to reach to the sky, full of silence and secrets. The only sound, however, was music, suddenly carried upwards by the winds. Lisbon turned her head and glanced at the open air theatre nearby, which was currently lit by colorful lights, before she closed her eyes to listen to the concert.

A woman was singing, her voice powerful, but the songs heavy with a beautiful melancholy. How fitting, Lisbon thought. For a while she allowed herself to forget why she had driven here, simply listening with her wandering thoughts guided by blue melodies.

It was only when sharp gasps of breath mixed with the tunes that she was abruptly pulled back to reality.

"Jane?" Hastily she turned to him and was momentarily frozen at the sight of her consultant. He sat slumped, his forearms still on his knees while the nails of his entwined fingers were buried in the back of his hands. His whole body was shaking violently and his shoulders jerked whenever he tried to catch his breath. A helpless moan that escaped his quivering lips finally got Lisbon out of her shock. Without thinking she scooted over to sit behind him on the table, placing her feet next to each of his sides and her hands gently on his back.

"Jane, calm down, please!" she pleaded softly. "You're having a panic attack. You need to calm down your breathing."

"Lisbon!" he gasped, sounding hoarse and desperate.

"I'm here, Jane, it's alright. Come on, take a deep breath. It's going to be fine. Just breathe, in and out. You know how this works, Jane." While she kept talking to him insistently Lisbon reached for his shoulders and carefully pulled him towards her to get him out of his bent position. "Deep breaths, Jane, in and out. Deep and slow breaths."

Jane followed her without resistance. Slowly he sat up, his straightening back against her knees, while he did as she told him. He sucked in the air to the rhythm she set and fought against the hyperventilation, seeking comfort by the soothing movements of her palms on his back.

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It took quite some time, Lisbon actually lost her sense of time, till Jane was finally able to breathe almost calmly and without her help again.

"I'm sorry," whispered as he still leaned against her legs.

"Never mind." Now it was her turn to inhale in relief. "You feeling better?"

With a sigh he rubbed his fingertips over lines of his face. "Barely," he answered honestly.

For a moment Lisbon was glad that he wasn't facing her and wouldn't see the sympathy and her own anguish in her eyes. She didn't even trust her voice to hide it so she stayed silent for awhile, focusing on the tunes in the air.

Again it was Jane who sidetracked her attention.

"What if I'm wrong?"

Lisbon blinked and looked down on his blond curls. "What?"

"What if I'm wrong?" he choked out again. "What if he's playing me again? What if I'm missing something? What if I'm wrong about this whole thing?"

Finding herself lost for words Lisbon opened and closed her mouth without replying anything. She felt dread washing over her like an ice cold shower. Jane was doubting himself and right now, with Red John changing rules and killing people anew, it was one of the worst things that could happen to them.

"You're not wrong, Jane." One could never know with Red John, no matter how much trust she had in Jane.

He ignored her poor attempt to assure him and went on.

"What if I miscalculated it? What if he comes for one of our own next time?"

"Then let's tell the team, so that they are warned and can help us!" Lisbon barely remembered how often she had told him that.

"No! We can't tell anybody!"

Wasn't it the definition of insanity to try something over and over again and expect different results? She desperately tore her hair at his harsh outburst. Yet it wasn't the right time to have the same discussion all over again, so for once she stopped herself from arguing any further.

"Leelee Barlow was innocent, Lisbon..." he started again, his voice more gentle now, but still heartbroken. "The only mistake she ever made was that I knew her. What if I fail someone else? What if he kills more innocent people? ... What if he kills our friends or their families, just like mine? What if he kills one of your brothers? Because of me?"

Lisbon had flinched at the mention of her brothers and quickly shook her head as she felt her own panic rising. At this point it was essential that she kept her head clear, now more than ever, especially when Jane was having a moment of weakness.

"It wasn't you who killed Leelee Barlow, Jane, or anyone else of Red John's victims!" she almost growled at him. Then she swallowed hard and added, "And his...future victims aren't your fault either." There was no point in denying that Red John would strike again in the near future, no matter how terrifying it was.

Jane objected with frantic empathy. "I got my family killed, Lisbon, and not just them! It is my fault! If it hadn't been for me, they wouldn't be dead!"

Lisbon's grip on his shoulder became firm, her knuckles coloring her skin white. "Listen to me, Jane! Red John is the monster here! He did all of this! You-didn't-kill-those-people!" She emphasized every single word. "You hear me?! You didn't kill them! You're trying to stop him!" She knew, however, that he wouldn't believe her and it made her eyes water with frustrated tears.

After a moment of silence he at least had the grace to say, "Thank you."

"Yeah, whatever," she rapidly blinked the tears away, but it was only when she felt his cool fingers touching hers that she could relax again. Still, when she felt the tense muscles beneath her palm, she knew that there was more he needed to say. She could almost physically feel the panic flooding his veins and sending shivers through his body once more. She probably would disagree with him again, but she had taken him here for a reason. Needing him to recover to his old self - to pull himself together, because she wouldn't be able to face their nemesis without him - she would offer him any comfort possible.

So when his breathing became erratic again, she encouraged him softly. "Out with it, Jane."

He inhaled deeply and when he finally spoke, his voice broke and became a whisper.

"What if he kills...you?"

"He won't, I'm a cop." Her immediate assurance was a try to show a certainty she didn't feel. One could never know with Red John. No matter how much trust she had in her own skills.

"So was Bosco! And Wainwright."

Lisbon flinched, but found the strength to straighten up and steady her voice. She needed to believe in herself, because even just allowing the thought of Red John coming for her would make her freak out. "I'm not letting him kill me, Jane. I'm not! He won't get a chance, I promise. You're stuck with me now, you know? Don't you think I would let you go unleashed on the world without me!"

There was a sound coming from him that nearly sounded like an amused snort and Lisbon saw her chance to press on.

"You're not alone in this, Jane," she said affectionately. "No matter what he throws at you, you still have me. He might think that he has only you to face him. But that's where he's wrong. I'm your double bottom. Your safety net, if you will," she tried to joke lamely.

There was another moment of silence before he slowly turned around on the bench to face her and looked at her so serious that there was no doubt that he meant what he was about to say. "That you are Lisbon. Don't you ever doubt it! You are my safety net – in more ways than one." His eyes were honest and deep, for once revealing all of his feelings.

While blinking with surprise, Lisbon swallowed hard over the emotion he let her see, feeling her hand trembling and her pulse jumping – and her own heart overflowing with tenderness and longing. Not giving it a second thought, she reached for him then, pulled him close and embraced him tightly. Jane didn't even hesitate and wrapped his arms around her slim waist to bury his face in her shirt, snuggling against her belly.

Lisbon's breath got caught in her throat. Never had she been so close to him, both emotionally and physically. It was almost too intimate how his torso was set between her legs, how he was pressed against her body as if he was trying to melt with her.

"Keep breathing..." he muttered against her flat stomach, the roles reversed now, and Lisbon finally gasped for air. She couldn't see it, but somehow she knew that he was smiling a little at the irony.

Slowly she relaxed, arranging her arms comfortably around him. It was oddly calming and yet exciting to have him near her like this. To feel how, whenever his shoulders raised and dropped in a slow and steady pace, he seemed to sink into her just a bit more.

XXX

Time went by, leaving both of them lost in thoughts. Lisbon absentmindedly let her hands stroke gently over Jane's back until, eventually, she allowed herself to bury her fingers in his precious golden locks.

"I always wanted to do that," she whispered, and when Jane returned a questioning sound, she tugged at some of his strands.

"Ah, that." His answer was also just a whisper but she could still hear the refreshing amusement in it.

She nodded although he couldn't see – but probably feel – it and enjoyed how the soft and in the dusk glowing hair was falling through her fingers.

"What's with women and my hair?" Jane wondered into her shirt, barely being serious.

Lisbon shrugged and smirked at him starting to hum with pleasure as her play with his curls was getting dedicated and kind of gleeful.

In fact he relished her fondling to the point that he tried to cuddle even more against her. The second, they both realized that he had actually accidentally rubbed his head against her chest, each of them froze.

Too many awkward seconds passed away, until Lisbon finally couldn't hold it any longer. It had been an accident – it better has been! – and the damage was done anyway, so with an unladylike snort she burst into laughter. It was the first time in weeks that she could afford more than a weak smile, and it felt so good, that she simply let go and sent her laughter freely out in the wind.

Jane pulled away, not too far by all means, just so that he was able to look at her. There was a smirk on his lips, and even though he wasn't laughing heartily, his eyes gleamed with long missed mischief. Lisbon shook her head, chuckling, while returning his gaze. That bastard was actually proud of what he did, she could tell. Seriously, she should punch him in the nose right away.

His grin deepened as if he had read her mind.

Well, he probably did, the jackass.

Despite the thought insult pure and honest fondness welled up in her heart, flooding it like a broken dam with fluid hot and vivid love. The sudden intensity of her emotion caught her by surprise, so much, that it turned her smile soft and unbelieving and her eyes watery.

'Does he mean that much too you?' she remembered Bosco wondering, and she answered to herself, *'More than I could have ever imagined.'*

I love you. These words had never been so clear in her head, so powerful, comforting and hurting. Never had she developed strong feelings for a man like this before. They scared her beyond anything reasonable, and it scared her to death, because she was so afraid of losing him – in one way or another.

When her mood got melancholy and torn, Jane's expression changed to serious as well.

Slowly he removed one hand from her waist and placed it warm and gently on her cheek. His thumb painted soothing circles on her skin and she leaned into the caress, blinking away some stubborn tears. They blocked her view into his marvelous blue-green eyes, which were keeping her captured.

She didn't think any of it when his hand tenderly slid to the back of her neck. And she made no effort to resist when he slowly pulled her down towards him. Her pulse increased quickly at the sight of his eyelids fluttering shut, and all she could do, when they were so close that she could almost taste him on her tongue, was inhaling a quivering breath and closing her eyes as well.

It was just a gentle touch, lips against lips. Just a slight pressure that lasted for some wonderful seconds.

As soon as they parted, their looks locked once more and when Lisbon tried to read in his, calm and reassuring, she realized that it had been a gesture of affection and comfort. For both their sakes.

She swallowed, but the lump in her throat wouldn't go away. Her heartbeat was fast and loud in her own ears, and when she raised her hands to his face, she couldn't hide their shivering. She hesitated to reach for him, but then again she thought she might use and give more of that very special comfort.

Their second kiss was just as innocent and sweet as the first. Jane hadn't stopped her. In fact it was him who added carefully testing movements to it; and since it simply felt like the right thing to do, two became three and three became even more.

It was only slow and cozy kisses they shared, and yet it was intimately touching. Jane's arms were around her waist again and she returned his embrace just as tightly. There barely was anything sexy about it, but it was sensual enough to make her toes curl and her heart pounding rapidly. Her senses were on overflow, especially since her skin tingled with electrified excitement. Hardly could she believe that this was happening. She and Jane were kissing, really kissing, and even though it was different from all the ways she had ever imagined it, it was nearly perfect.

Not quite.

Because they were carrying too much baggage around; fears too strong to bear, arguments too heavy to solve and worries too great to deal with at this time.

With a sigh Lisbon retreated, opened her eyes and averted her gaze. Her own panic,

which she could usually control so well, suddenly strangled her throat and paralyzed her mind as she watched the final setting of the red sun. That was until long, now warm fingers covered her smaller, cold ones and Lisbon blinked to look down at him.

When Jane squeezed her hand softly, and she found some reassuring calm in his eyes, breathing became a bit easier and she was no longer feeling like falling towards a disappearing ground.

With a small smile he tugged at her hand to help her stepping down.

"You want to go home?" she asked and Jane simply nodded. They shared one last wistful glance around, some thankful thoughts without the need to be spoken out loud, and listened to a few more tunes, before they eventually started moving towards her car.

Lisbon really shouldn't have been surprised when he wouldn't let go of her hand during the entire way back, giving her reassurance and comfort.

Because, after all, he was *her* safety net, too.

The End