

MEA CULPA

A Profiler Fanfiction by AmandaK

Bailey slammed the brakes. The tires screeched and the car stopped a few meters behind the parked ambulance. John hopped from the back seat. The street looked deserted but appearances could be deceiving and his eyes flickered back and forth for signs of danger. Sam had no such qualms. Regardless of her own safety she jumped from the car and ran to the ambulance.

"Easy, Sam," Bailey warned her.

She didn't seem to hear him. Instead, she cranked the doorhandle.

"Nooo!"

The wail that escaped Sam pierced the air. The sound, so desolate, tore at John's heart and he started to jog to her. Bailey's arm stopped him. He struggled against the older man's grip for a second, then turned and began to pace beside the unmarked car. He wanted to kick something, to lash out, to pound his fists against a wall until they bled. No, he wanted to kill. He wanted to kill Jack. He wanted to place his hands around the bastard's throat and slowly squeeze the life out of him. He wanted to see the acknowledgement of defeat in Jack's eyes when he died. Goddammit! The son of a bitch had no right to do this to Sam, to do this to anyone.

The moment she had come running up to him and Bailey, yelling that Coop was gone and showing them the rose, John had known what they would find once they traced the missing ambulance. So had Bailey. And so had Sam. None of them mentioned it and they all prayed they would find Coop in time but when Jack was involved, there really wasn't such a thing as 'in time'. The SOB was too clever: he knew how the VCTF worked, he knew when to strike, he knew when and how they would find the ambulance. Jack was playing them like a puppeteer.

John continued to pace back and forth. Every second turn he was faced with the sight of Sam grieving. He had no choice but notice the way she hung her head in despair, how her shoulders shook with heavy sobs. Bailey was standing beside her. John could see his boss talk softly to her, while he gently pried her hands away from Coop's lifeless body.

God, what must she be going through right now?

He couldn't begin to fathom her pain. He knew she would be racking herself with guilt. Although she wasn't to blame. She never was, never had been. The fault was Jack's.

And his.

John froze in his tracks, utterly shocked at the unbidden thought. He watched, while the coroner's people walked up to the ambulance to take care of Coop's body, and tried to analyze where that thought had come from.

Guilt.

That was it.

How many times had he wished Coop would disappear? Willed the ATF agent to vanish into thin air and never be heard from again? Wanted him gone from his life, or better yet, from Sam's?

But not like this! he protested. Not at Jack's hands. Yes, he had wanted Coop to go away but he never wanted him to die. Not really. And certainly not in a way that would hurt Sam so much.

John knew he was being foolish, that his aversion against Coop had not caused the other man's death. Nick Cooper knew the risks of getting involved with Sam, and still he had pursued her. Yet, John couldn't help but think that he could-- no, should have made a difference. He had let his guard down. When they had Corrello in custody, they had felt safe, if only for a little while. If he had paid more attention, he might have noticed something. He might have been able to save Coop.

Right now, he would sacrifice his left arm to bring Coop back. To see the obnoxious, gum-chewing bomb specialist walk up and give Sam one of those leering grins that John detested so much. If that were what it took to make Sam smile again, if it wiped that look of utter defeat from her face, he would accept it, and be glad too.

Yet, John knew there was nothing he could do. Coop was dead. And Sam would have to live with that.

So did he.

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