

Rating: None, it's harmless.

Category: Could be gen or slash, however you like it.

Characters: J/B

Word Count: Missed the limit by miles, it's way over 1000

Notes: Feedback, critical or otherwise, is always welcome. As always thanks to Sen-Betas for their invaluable help.

Pas de Deux

Von Pat

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We're too old for this shit. Well, at least *I* am. After all I was already on the very far side of mid-thirty when this snotty 'I've seen it all' twenty-something transferred from Seattle to the 3rd Cascade Precinct, got partnered with me and immediately started to get on my nerves. He hasn't changed that much. He's still getting on my nerves, I still hate it when he's right and

I still love him dearly - like I have for the last twenty-five years. But it gets harder to keep up the shape allowing us to still work on the streets. I can feel it in every bone, we're getting old and we don't have much time left.

And that's why we're here in the middle of the night, crouching, guns drawn, behind two stacks of rusty barrels in the dimly lit backyard of the long closed Cascade Import/Export Co., getting slowly soaked by a constant cold drizzle.

We're part of their back-up.

God, I hope this pans out. I really, really hope that, this time, it pans out. We've *done* our duty, but frankly - I'm tired now. With each passing month the pain in my joints grows, as well as my fear of failing my partner, and the idea of retiring to a warm, peaceful place is looking better and better.

Although I have to say the first look I got of Sandburg wasn't very promising. A long-haired, short ex-student with two earrings who talks too much and has a doubtful reputation - not exactly what I was looking for. I like to think of myself as 'conservative' but Eric claims I'm simply old-fashioned. *He* saw Sandburg on the news and immediately insisted on checking them out, eager to learn what was going on over at the central precinct. Of course we ended up fast-talking our captain into pulling all available strings to get us assigned to their back-up detail.

A pebble bounces off my shoulder, making me look over to see Eric's impatient face from across the gap between the barrels. He rolls his eyes at me and points in the direction of the vacant house's rickety back door. Yeah, yeah, okay, I'm paying attention, hopefully for the last time, but I seriously doubt it. My hand-gestured question on how many people are in there is answered, after a few seconds of concentration, with a quick horizontal motion of his flat hand. So, the dealers we're here to catch haven't arrived yet. A short look at my watch confirms that we still have a few minutes until they're due to arrive.

Meanwhile our supposed top team, Ellison and Sandburg, are having a quiet, but very expressive, discussion in front of said back door - obviously on the topic of who goes first, or maybe even of how to proceed generally. I don't know, I'm not the one with the good ears. Either way, it's simply annoying. If they can't do better than this, they're not gonna make it. It's a waste of our time and I'm sure Major Crimes will shortly be minus one rookie cop-wannabe.

I throw Eric a sour look but he's too engrossed in watching Sandburg getting animatedly into Ellison's stony face to notice it. The two of them are so out-of-sync, it isn't really funny any more. They're clearly marching to the beat of different drummers and I'm seriously worried someone will get hurt tonight. Damn. I swear if it's Eric, I'll personally rip Banks a new one for letting this mess happen. But we're running out of time, we *have* to test them.

It's Eric's sudden alert posture that tells me Crisson and Kinley have arrived. A short look at Ellison's slightly bent head shows that he's obviously also listening to something. His so-called partner seems to be frozen in mid motion in front of him, staring round-eyed at Ellison's face. Okay, so Ellison actually may be what Sandburg claimed he wasn't - interesting. With two terse gestures Ellison sends the uniforms to their places and draws his weapon while Sandburg manages to retreat to the other side of the door, thankfully without stumbling over his feet or arguing with his senior partner. Oh, well, at least the guy seems to have a healthy sense of priorities. If he can just stay out of the way now... No, won't happen, he's drawn his gun too.

Squinting a little, I observe the two of them. Sandburg's eyes are glued to Ellison's face; his lips are moving again, while his face takes on a questioning expression. God, I hope the guy hasn't re-started the discussion about who goes first. Whatever - this time he gets an answer. Ellison is listening again - his hand moves slowly, indicating an opening door and a walking motion, followed by a short 'three' sign. Three men entering the house. A glance at Eric reveals a broad smile on his face and a slow nod confirms my suspicions. Yes! Ellison got it right! Suddenly I can feel a lump in my throat that makes swallowing hard. Hope is raising its traitorous head.

I look back at them just in time to see Ellison frown. Something's not right and I have the familiar sinking feeling that the shit is about to hit the fan. Eric's hissing curse convinces me that something is *seriously* wrong. Shooting a look at the uniforms, Ellison raises four fingers, followed by a circling motion around the house. Shit. Shitshitshit. Four men still outside the front door. We expected only Crisson and Kinley and not a whole bunch of guys. They broke their pattern. Okay, four men outside the front door, the uniforms will cover that. We'll simply wait until after the deal goes down. Crisson, Kinley and whoever is with them will walk out either front or back, right into our trap.

A short nod from Ellison ordering us over, and we move stealthily in behind them. His urgent expression, along with Eric's pinched lips, tell me that there's more going on in there than just a simple deal. The horizontal motion of Eric's hand across his throat clues me in. Nice, we have an upcoming execution on our hands. So, no waiting. We'll be going in now.

Ellison raises another two fingers, then stabs them at the door and points back at himself. Okay, two of the guys on the far wall of the room, he'll deal with them. One sharp nod indicates Sandburg's understanding. It's followed by a single raised finger, first indicating a point over the entrance and then Sandburg. Huh? Third guy is *where*? But Sandburg simply repeats his nod, his face now all strained concentration, showing no hint of doubt. I may not get it but it seems that at least *they're* on the same page now. Finally!

My heart beats faster. Please, please let it be true this time. And please, let them survive it.

Okay. Keep cool. Sandburg is probably all show but we're still three against three.

Turning, Ellison gives the sign for us to stay outside and cover the back door in case of someone escaping. What? Major Crime's star detective wants to go in with nothing more for backup than his hippie? These guys are dangerous, they're armed, no way is he going.... Eric nods at him and inwardly, I groan. This whole mess is gonna blow sky-high, I just know it.

Ellison motions a short "on three" and, resigned, I raise my gun to get ready - so does Eric.

To my utter surprise and annoyance Sandburg steps in right behind Ellison. Damn, that's not standard procedure, but Ellison doesn't even seem to mind that the little coward is already looking for cover behind his back. He simply starts the count.

One...

Sandburg takes a deep breath and squares his shoulders. His fingers flex around the grip of his weapon.

Please, kid, do us all a favour and don't drop the gun.

Two...

They're doing it all wrong! Don't they realize that? Sandburg isn't supposed to hide behind his partner.

I see him swallow hard and I just *know* they're not gonna pass.

Three...

Ellison's fingers clench sharply back down into a fist - the 'GO'

He explodes through the door, shouting "Cascade PD! Put your weapons down!"

Stunned, I watch the deadly dance that unfolds before my eyes in mere seconds. They move like they've choreographed this! There's no hesitation.

Ellison doesn't even bother to look back as he storms the room.

Ignoring the blindfolded guy lying on the floor, he holds his weapon on Crisson, carelessly presenting his uncovered back to whatever might lay in wait behind him.

Except there is no uncovered back.

Because there's Sandburg.

Who turns around in one swift motion, to stand back to back with his partner, in absolute faith that Ellison won't fail him.

He steadily aims at the third guy, Kinley, on the gallery over the door, his eyes not so much as flickering to look over his shoulder.

It's over.

Lowering my gun, I look at Eric and our eyes meet in mutual agreement.

We've found them.

We survived our calling.

We're finally allowed to pass the torch on.

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