

Authors notes:

Okay I know it is a little early for Christmas stories or stories around Christmas time setting but you can blame the Sentinel Angst List for this (wave to list<g>). I have to give thanks to my beta, Bonnie, who you should all thank seeing I really need a beta <g>. Please send comments as that makes me write more stories faster.

While there is still time

By

[Sentarla](#)

A light snow had been falling for hours, it was Christmas Eve and with over half of Cascade PD out with the flu, Jim Ellison found himself sitting at his desk on call. Blair was out doing last minute shopping. Knowing how much his partner hated the cold, Jim knew the presents must have been important.

Much to everyone's relief, there had been little use for the police so far. There were a few break and enters as well as two people arrested for disorderly conduct. All in all it was a quiet afternoon, but no one was complaining.

When the call of a fifteen car pileup with fatalities came over the PA, Jim, Rafe, Joel and Brown were sent out along with ten other patrol units.

It was not until the car was in motion, speeding towards the address Joel had been given, that Jim started to feel uneasy. Knowing the destination, Joel looked over towards Jim and gave him a tight smile.

"Where was the accident, Joel, I missed the announcement?"

Crossing his toes inside his shoes, Joel replied. "Umm, near the University roundabout, but you said Sandburg had to do some shopping, so he is probably not even in that area."

Clenching his jaw, Jim nodded and pulled out his cellphone, needing to hear his Guide's voice. Pressing the speed dial, Jim listened as a recorded voice told him that Blair's cell phone was either switched off or not in a mobile area.

Within moments they arrived at the crash site. There were three ambulances on site and another three on the way. Some of the patrol units that were closer when the call had come in, were already busy talking to witnesses and helping the medics. Getting out of the car, Jim and Joel went over to the officer in charge at the present time.

"What have we got, Sullivan?"

Taking in the imposing figure of Jim Ellison, Sullivan pulled himself up to his full height and tried to impress the legendary Detective with a detailed report.

"From eye witness's reports, a large blue semi-trailer lost control on the icy road and overturned, crushing the two cars that were travelling beside it. The other twelve cars, due to the ice and the suddenness of the accident, crashed into the semi and each other. The driver of the semi and four other cars have been sent to the nearest hospital. So far we have six dead, all from the first two cars, and the drivers of the other cars are being checked out on the scene."

Nodding his head, Jim left Joel with Sullivan and went to take a closer look at the cars. The smell of blood on the cold wind was so intense that Jim turned down his sense of smell to almost nothing. As he got closer the destruction came sharply into focus. The first two cars were a mangled mess under the semi-trailer. But what stopped Jim cold was the dark spray of crimson blood on the snow-whitened road, under and around what could have only been Blair's car. Rushing forward, Jim grasped the mangled ajar door and looked inside.

The relief of not finding Blair dead in the car was both a blessing and a curse. There was drying blood on the steering wheel and the seats were covered in glass fragments, most of which were light pink and red. The sound of his name being yelled pulled Jim's attention briefly away from the wet, sticky metallic substance. Trying to come to grips with what he was seeing, Jim turned back to the wreck.

"Jim, is that..."

Nodding his head slightly, Jim felt Joel grab his shoulders and turn him back around. "Come on, Jim, let's go ask Sullivan where the kid is. I'll send a uniform to drive you."

Going on autopilot, Jim let himself be manhandled away from the car and towards Officer Sullivan.

"Sullivan, what happened to the man in the green Volvo?" Joel asked the busy officer, all too aware of the stoic detective at his back.

"Umm, green volvo...green volvo, umm, ohh you mean car three, the bleeder." Joel tensed as he heard Jim growl. "Yes. Where is the driver?"

As if it was unimportant, Sullivan waved towards the medical personnel. "He was sent to the hospital not long after I arrived, he was bleeding pretty badly."

Giving a quick nod of thanks, Joel called over a nearby uniform and told her to take Jim to the nearest hospital, where they had sent the victims. Receiving a puzzled look, Joel continued to tell her that one of the victims was Jim's partner, and as if a light had been switched on, she completely understood and effectively took charge of the dazed detective and led him quickly to her car.

The trip to the hospital took forever. His senses were no longer working and all he could think about were Sullivan's words, "the bleeder"; "bleeding pretty badly". He felt like his world was crumbling.

The hospital was in full swing when, they arrived; rushing up to the front desk, Jim slammed his badge onto the desk and demanded to see Blair Sandburg. Over-worked and tired, the duty nurse looked at his charts and shook his head. Impatient, Jim told him that Sandburg was part of the fifteen car pileup at Rainier and gave a brief description of him. Nodding his head, the nurse paged a doctor and held up a finger, indicating for Jim to wait a moment. Seeing the doctor come out, Jim rushed over.

"Have you seen my partner? Where is Sandburg?" Shaking her head, the doctor led Jim aside.

"We have only received two people from the Rainier Crash. We had to send the rest on to Cascade General. One of them matches your partner's description, but I'm sorry to say that he was DOA. If you would come this way, I'll show you and you can tell me if it is him; we have not had a chance to try and confirm his identity."

Unable to accept what was being said, Jim just stood there stunned as the doctor went on. After a few moments, she saw that Jim was no longer listening, so she simply took Jim's arm and led him towards an empty trauma room. All Jim could think about was what he had never told Blair. There were so many feelings he had kept inside, afraid that his guide would leave as soon as he knew. Jim had lived with him for two years now and had kept all his emotions inside. For the last month or so, he had been tossing around the idea of telling Blair how much he needed and relied on him. He had wanted to make a commitment to telling Blair last Christmas, but he just never had the guts.

Seeing the brown curls under the blood-splattered sheet was nearly his undoing. Remembering he had an audience, Jim lifted a shaking hand to the sheet and pulled it back.

Nearly collapsing with relief, Jim saw not his still, dead Guide as he had been led to believe, but another Cascadian resident, whom he did not recognize. Thanking God, Jim shook his head at the doctor.

"This is not my partner, it's not Sandburg."

Nodding her head, the doctor replaced the sheet and led Jim out of the room.

"Well, I'm happy it was not your partner detective, but he still belonged to someone."

With that realization having just sunk in, Jim realized that Blair could still be alive somewhere and hurt. Jim took hold of the doctor's arm and barely restrained himself from shaking the answer out of her.

"Where is my partner? They said he was sent here!?"

A little unnerved, but understanding where Jim was coming from, she stood very still and calmly answered. "Try Cascade General, that is where all the other crash victims were sent."

Letting go of the doctor as if she were a hot potato, Jim raced out of the hospital and commandeered the police car, not bothering to wait for the stunned uniform who was waited in the lobby for him.

The trip to Cascade General was fast and furious. Most cars moved out of the way not because of the sirens but simply because they wanted to live. The entire way to the hospital, Jim prayed and bargained, swearing that if he was given a second chance, he would make sure he told Sandburg how much he meant to him, how he was family. The experience at the other hospital had brought it all vividly home to Jim; tell them while you can. Reaching the hospital entrance, Jim abandoned the car and pushed past the people waiting till he reached the administration desk.

"Blair Sandburg, I'm looking for Blair Sandburg, he was involved in the Rainier accident. I was told he was sent here."

Seeing that the person manning the desk was annoyed and about to call security, Jim pulled out his badge and forcefully placed it on the desk before her.

"I want to see my partner, and I want to see him now!"

Holding her hands out in a calming motion, the receptionist told Jim to calm down and she would call the attending doctor.

Backing down a little, Jim had only paced in front of the desk twice before his hearing kicked back in and he heard his Guide's pain-filled moan of distress. Not bothering to wait for the doctor, Jim followed the low sound until he reached a darkened room, two floors up.

There were two other people asleep in the dimly lit wardroom, but Jim acted as if they did not exist. Spotting his Guide in the bed closest to the far window, he slowing walked towards it. Seeing Blair's chest rise and fall with each

breath allowed the tough Cop to let out the breath that he had been holding, allowing himself to relax; his Guide was alive.

Hearing Blair moan again, Jim quickened his pace and gently placed a hand on his Guide's forehead. Feeling Blair calm at the touch, Jim took a moment to look Blair over and assess his injuries.

A large white bandage was taped to the ribs, indicating they were either broken or cracked; another was wrapped around Blair's head and there were stitches in various places over his arms and legs, some covered, some not. The most frightening injury, however, was to Blair's left arm; it required many layers of gauze and a metal contraption to keep the limb still from the elbow down

Before Jim had a chance to sit down, a doctor came into the room and paused just inside, to gain his breath.

"Really, detective, there was no need to worry. As I would have told you if you had waited for me, your partner is fine."

Giving a small sheepish smile to the doctor, Jim shook his head. "How is he really?"

Looking over the chart at the end of the bed, the doctor indicated the two chairs near the wall and sat down.

"He is doing really well. When he was brought in, he had three broken ribs, numerous cuts that needed stitches, about two hundred all told, with his left arm needing most of them. His arm had been deeply cut from elbow to wrist, cutting the artery. It was only the quick response of the paramedics at the scene that saved his life from blood loss. Mr. Sandburg is also suffering a nasty concussion from where he hit his head and opened a nice two-inch gash. From what I have heard of the accident, he is a very, very lucky man. If he had been one car closer...anyway, we are keeping him overnight for observation and then another three days because we can't risk him opening any of the stitches in his arm; that is why it is immobile. Barring that, there should be no complications and you can take him home. I assume there will be someone to watch him for the next week or so?"

"Yes, he's my roommate. I'll take time off if I have to."

"Good, good." the doctor said, making a note on the chart in front of him and rising from the chair.

"Well then detective, I need to go back to rounds. If you need anything, page a nurse. I will check back on Mr. Sandburg before I go home tomorrow. Merry Christmas."

"Yeah, thanks, you too," Jim absently replied, his attention now fully on his partner.

Pulling the chair closer, Jim picked up his Guide's right hand and started rubbing his thumb in small circles over the cold pale skin. Talking quietly, Jim started to pour his heart out to the pale man in the bed. He told Blair of the feelings he had been holding back all this time. Of how Blair was like a brother to him, a light when everything was dark and the only thing that stood between him and a bullet when times got too hard.

Jim was still talking an hour later when he felt a change in Blair's heartbeat. Fearing the worst, but hoping for something else, Jim looked up from his Guide's hand into a pair of dazed blue eyes.

"Hey, chief, welcome back."

Blinking once, Blair opened his mouth slightly and tried to say Jim's name. Reaching over to the small bedside table, Jim poured a small amount of water into a cup and helped Blair sip it.

"Better?"

Giving a small smile, Blair looked at his Sentinel and gave a small prayer to God. It had been close this time, very close. Blair had not expected to wake up. Knowing what his Sentinel was like in emotional situations, Blair knew he could not let Jim continue to pour out his heart and soul, even if he would have liked to have heard it all, having only woken up for the last bit; seeing it shine in his Sentinel's eyes would have to do.

"Don't..."

Jim looked at Blair and waited. "Enough...too much...too soon, later."

Seeing his Guide's eyes droop and sensing sleep about to take the younger man once again, Jim smiled and nodded; they would talk about it all later, after Blair was more awake, and he himself had more emotional control.

Watching sleep claim his Guide, Jim sat back and stroked Blair's hand again, thanking God for allowing him another chance to tell Blair while he still could, what he meant to the tough hard ass detective known as James Ellison.

~Fin~

Please remember to send feedback, and go hug someone you love, if there is no one near, then hug yourself, either one feels nice <g>