

Kaleidoscope

Jisbon

Von Jisbon

Kapitel 1: Graze

Set: Somewhere in season 1, after 1/17 ("Let's do a trust fall.")

"Change came in disguise of revelation, set his soul on fire.

She says she always knew he'd come around.

And the decades disappear like sinking ships"

(The Killers/A dustland fairytale)

Graze

"You can go in now."

The Doctor whose name tag identified him as "Dr Cains", was ill shaven and slightly overweight. Just as obvious he was tired and frustrated and Jane couldn't help but ask himself whether the fact that the man had been ignored during the recent promotion or an encounter with his latest patient were to blame. Given the circumstances the latter seemed to be likely. But if he ever felt anything remotely like pity, that feeling withered the moment his wedding band was briefly glanced at and all the wrong assumptions were made.

"Maybe she'll listen to you."

The fool hadn't even read Lisbon's intake form properly nor had he ever looked at her right hand.

But Jane wasn't in the mood for explanation's of any kind, he had already smelled to much disinfectant and lost enough time.

"Oh, I doubt that."

Instead he smiled and shrugged, like they were having that kind of a relationship,

where he was used to waiting for her on hospital corridors, because he told her to be careful all the time and she just never listened. It was a bad joke but the irony wasn't wasted on him and the moment his fingers touched the doorknob the grimace vanished.

Jane sneaked a quick peek before he entered the small room, took a moment to observe and to detect Lisbon's mood. They hadn't talked since the incident; there had been too many others around, too much fuss. Which is why he had no idea if they'd just talk or if he was about to enter a grumpy lion's den.

Not that it would have mattered much anyway.

What he saw was no unusual sight and therefore held no evidence: Lisbon sat on a small desk and fought her way through a bunch of paper and she seemed completely absorbed by her dull task. The slightly stiff, banged left arm was the only detail to differ from the familiar picture—that and the fact that she wasn't sitting in her office but in a hospital room.

The coffee from the machine that accompanied Jane was probably a thin swill and lukewarm at most, but he carefully placed the cup on the table corner nevertheless.

It was the best peace proposal he had to offer and apparently it was an unwanted one.

Lisbon didn't say anything like that—in fact she didn't say anything at all—and she didn't have to. The way she tensed a little when she heard him approach, the way she didn't look at him practically sang about her suppressed anger and her wish to be somewhere else. He took a few steps back and leaned his back against a wall.

This would take a while.

The first thing he said was: "Listen, I am sorry," because he really was and for once she didn't have to make him say these words.

"Don't beat yourself up. I'm okay, it's only a graze."

She answered absent mindedly, didn't even bother looking at him. Instead, she scribbled at the dismissal form like her life depended on it. Two hours ago her life had depended on something else, but he was not going to point out the obvious for her.

"Once I've filled these out, I'm outta here. Jones has probably already lawyered up and I don't want to waste any more time in here."

Cains had probably tried to persuade her to stay the night "for safety reasons, in case she was in a shock" something like that, and fled because he found that particular nut too hard to crack, but Jane wasn't going to give up that easily. Honesty had failed him so far, which is why he continued with half-jokes.

"I guess I owe you a free punch."

He smiled miserably, not only because he had seen her punch suspects before and was pretty sure that she had a terrible right hook, despite being so tiny.

"I'll keep that in mind."

Still nothing but the scratching of her pen to fill the small room.

"You should, it's probably your once in a lifetime chance to do what you've been thinking about for some time now. And don't say you didn't, because I know you did."

He shifted uneasily from one foot to the other and became serious again. "The situation was under control until I crashed the party. I deserve it." Another variation of the truth—and an ugly little understatement as well.

"I know you didn't mean any of this to happen." Polite emptiness seemed to be all Lisbon was willing to offer him but he could not content himself with that "little" here. This was something they had to clarify.

This had happened: Last night the owner of a medium sized business was found in a puddle of his own blood. The first thing Lisbon wanted to do, in the morning, was to have a talk with his partner in business, Robert Jones. And she had brought him, her consultant, along for all the insight he could give. When they arrived at the house there had been a lot of screaming and waving of a gun, on Jones' side—a clear case of a man being unable to cope with what he had done. And a tale of too much alcohol, judging by the smell on his breath.

According to his own, slightly confusing statements Jones had been torn between shooting himself and shooting them. Lisbon had told him to stay behind and keep quiet, but like always, he had known so much better. Instead, he had been his usual self, playing his games asking all the wrong questions and drawing all the right conclusions, being about ninety percent sure that the man wouldn't fire.

But this time ninety percent hadn't been enough.

The catching remark that pushed Jones over the edge had been: "Go ahead, shoot yourself if you feel you have to. You'll ruin that nice, expensive looking suit with your brain muck, but at this rate you'll be very, very dead and won't care anymore. That's your choice."

In this very moment Jones had decided to shoot at them. Lisbon had been his first choice, because she was the armed one. She had thrown herself to the ground, but she had been a second too late, the second the bullet had needed to graze her shoulder. Seconds after that Sac PD had finally arrived and tackled down Jones.

Jane hadn't been of much benefit to anyone.

"You leave me hanging here, but I guess it's only fair." He tried to make it sound like an objective estimation, something to notice and cope with, but failed miserably. Because having earned such a treatment was dead certain nothing to pass over with levity—not even for him.

And he was used to passing over a lot of things.

"I'm not leaving you anywhere, Jane." Lisbon sounded a little tired, strained like she had been explaining the same matter to a stubborn child the whole day—a stubborn child named Patrick Jane to be precise. "You simply did what you always do and this time I wasn't fast enough to balance it. Now, can we please drop the matter?"

She meant what she had said, that much was obvious to him.

Justice was the romantic ideal she clung onto, he had known that much already. What he had only guessed till today was where she saw herself in the big picture. Now he knew for sure—and he wished he didn't.

And suddenly, he was *so* mad at her.

For meaning what she said, for not thinking about leaving him despite the fact that he nearly had gotten her killed today. For being who she was. For blaming herself instead of him, for acting like dying in the name of "justice" would be no big deal. For a whirlwind of reasons that surprised and alarmed him at the same time, but at the very moment they were just another thing to pass over.

Right now, he was just going to be angry, because that feeling demanded neither excuses nor explanation's of any kind.

"Oh, please, Lisbon! Stop being a saint, just once!" he growled, seemingly absorbed with brushing away an imaginary lint from his shoulder with a tense hand.

Lisbon stiffened before she put the pen aside and finally, for the first time during this whole mess, looked him in the eye. It was a cold and stern look and she was trying to hide something behind it. His always observing eyes noted this and a few other things, like how pale her face was and he was fairly certain that it was not only the effect of

the neon light. The same applied for the dark circles around her eyes and the larger amount of make-up she had used today to hide those.

This was not about Jones, this was about something that she had been lugging around for longer.

"I never pretended to be a saint, I'm just being reasonable. Somebody has to." She clenched her right hand into a fist. "And besides you wouldn't know anyway, since you don't even believe in the existence of saints." She pointed out triumphant, her voice laboriously controlled.

No, of course he didn't—how could he? He wasn't even sure Lisbon did, catholic school or not, but that was neither here nor there at the moment.

Seemingly, he had finally managed to get through to her, but he suddenly doubted if it was a desirable place to go in her current state of mind; or in his for that matter.

But he should have thought about that earlier. Much earlier, because now it was now impossible to retreat to his fortress of fake smiles and smug remarks.

"I don't need to, and for what it's worth, I never accused you of pretending. I know you don't do that...at least not when it comes to important things."

He shook his head in awe, because she really was a puzzle. One he hadn't solved yet and maybe never would. It was not the first time that the thought of their limited time together grazed him, but it was the first time that the weight almost buried him. He'd find and kill Red John and then... *Yeah, what then?* He had never really thought about that time. It was an elusive thing, too far away and much too close at the same time. Maybe he'd die doing it, maybe there'd be the death penalty waiting for him or he'd have to live out the rest of his days in a federal prison, he didn't really care—at least that's what he preferred to tell himself. Something else he insisted on fooling himself with was that he had become incapable of caring about any living human being; that Lisbon, Cho, Rigsby and Van Pelt were just background actors, the supporting group preparing the stage for his grand, final entrance. (Someday and somehow, he would have to stop lying to himself.)

And Lisbon had known enough about his private madness and agreed to working with him nevertheless, despite her own doubts.

"You really are a saint." The words came out much more gentle than originally intended, affectionate and a little surprised.

He had always enjoyed solving puzzles and if things were different... But that was a dangerous game to play, because things *weren't* different. They couldn't be.

With his outlooks that would be an all too cruel joke.

His words had a strange effect on her. For a moment, before she hastily turned away from him, he even hallucinated angry tears glittering in her eyes. Absurd, because he had never seen her on the verge of crying before. Preposterous, because he would have bet on the fact that they'd not be there, because the realization that she could have died today took two full hours to hit her.

"For somebody who claims to be so smart you're talking something that does sound remarkably like bullshit right now."

The boss was back—at least that was the impression she tried to make.

And she did her best and did acceptable, but her performance was not nearly good enough. He was the expert, he noticed the little creak in her voice, the clenched fist. Sarcasm had never suited her much and the fact that she took refuge there told him how much she wanted the upper hand over him, to remind him that she was his boss.

But for all that his expertise was worth nothing because he had no idea about what she was trying so hard *not* to think about.

"You are one to talk, Lisbon." A cruel smile distorted his lips.

And he knew then she'd be unable to leave things here. He was not only questioning her authority, he had somehow ended questioning her view on her job and the whole cop thing. Questioning who she was, that's what he had been doing. He hadn't planned on doing it, it had just happened. Sometimes, conversations just did that—even to him.

Lisbon cleared her throat and forced herself to withstand his gaze.

"I have no idea what you..." she hissed, reaching for the now certainly cold cup of coffee next to her in a hopeless attempt to steady her nerves.

"Really, Lisbon?"

Jane interrupted her impatiently while he took an impulsive step toward her. He didn't even know what he wanted to do there, probably something pointless like grapping her arm and Lisbon breaking his because of that—fortunately enough they already were in a hospital, he thought humorlessly. But whatever it would have been his sudden movement startled her enough and she ended up sweeping the cup off the table instead.

For a laughably long moment they both watched his peace offer taking a short flight in his direction, and then land in the space between them. The brown liquid splashed over the floor and the plastic cup rolled out of sight, under the bed.

"Damn it, Jane!" Lisbon growled before she grabbed a stack of paper towels.

He didn't stir and he didn't say a word. He told himself that it was because he was a coward and couldn't tell her that apparently nervousness made her inept; after all she was the one with the gun in here. A soft spoken voice in his head, one which he wanted to silence so badly and which sounded remarkably like Charlotte's told him something else: That he was sorry, again for getting rough and driving her into a corner like this, that she deserved better.

And while she moved to clean up the mess, she muttered something. Something that was probably never meant for him to hear, something he didn't really understand. "Saint", "resources" and "matter" were the few words he was able to identify unambiguously.

It was at this moment that the door opened and a very young nurse stepped in and she immediately noticed the loaded atmosphere. "I...I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. I'll just come back in a few minutes." Something akin to panic stained her voice.

Lisbon shook her head and stopped her.

"That won't be necessary, we were done here anyway," she said with the full weight of her authority acting calm and completely ignoring him, "And I'm sorry for ...this," Lisbon added while she pointed at the floor and the soggy paper towels.

Jane considered himself dismissed then.

During his drive through Sacramento, his brain kept replaying the moment in the hospital room where Lisbon had muttered those words he hadn't understood. They held the last clue to explain her strange behavior; that was a safe assumption. It took him til he was halfway through Sacramento to solve the case nevertheless. He tested the words in various orders and a few gaps remained, but he finally got the tune.

"If I were I saint I wouldn't want to know...would it be the access to the CBI resources or me you'd mourn so eager. It wouldn't even matter."

And when he finally did, he was on the verge of turning over, right there on the freeway just to return to the hospital. Of returning there just to shake her til she

came to her senses; of continuing a fight that couldn't be won today because some things just weren't rational—fear wasn't, fundamental's weren't... and trust wasn't as well.

He knew that probably better than anyone else.

And this is why he let the moment pass and still followed traffic, still was on his way to the CBI at the end of it. Because he had to admit something: It was an ugly question but maybe, perhaps well-earned.

And a part of him was irked again, because he had told her the truth, only a few weeks ago. Maybe she hadn't listened, or she had been too stubborn to search for the truth somewhere behind jokes and silly trust falls.

"Lisbon, I want you to know that you can trust me. No matter what happens, I'll be there for you. I will. I need you to know that."

He couldn't help but smile at the memory then, because it was so typical of her, and of him to dance around the truth like that.

Jane fetched out his phone, flipped it open and dialed Lisbon's number.

And then he had to wait, because she didn't take his call. Maybe she couldn't because she was somewhere on the road as well, but it seemed much more likely that she just didn't want to. Either because she wasn't in the mood for struggling with him anymore or because she was embarrassed by her little outburst, the outcome was the same. It was no real surprise, the real surprise was how lost it made him feel. If he wasn't able to tell her now, he'd...

And while he was still trying to decide what to do, her voice suddenly filled the car.

"This is Senior Agent Teresa Lisbon. I can't take your call right now, but if you leave a message..."

He let his hand fall slowly and then completely stopped because he had just changed his mind: He would just follow the orders of that very distant Lisbon and leave her a message.

"...I'll call you back as soon as possible."

Jane cleared his throat. Speaking to machines had always made him feel stupid, but he had to do this. "Lisbon, for somebody so smart you seem to think something that does sound remarkably like bullshit."

He put effort into faking a cheerful voice and then he held off, again. Because he hadn't called to say something like that.

There were many things he could and should have said, things she probably wouldn't believe because sneaky remarks and disbelief were her way of protecting herself—but knowing that failed to legitimize his omission. Despite all this, was a unique possibility, because she wasn't there to brush him off.

"No, I'm sorry, that wasn't funny at all. And actually, that's not what I wanted to say."

He grimaced and found himself at a loss for words, again. It wasn't like him to stutter like this, but then again it wasn't like him to tape or to be this...real. His showman camouflage felt very far away and he felt so vulnerable, but he forced himself to continue speaking.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry we argued and I'm sorry, I...You matter. Don't ever think otherwise." His voice sounded hoarse, throaty and he spoke way too quick. This was not a joke.

"So...take care of yourself, please. Let me..."

He quickly hung up then because he just couldn't say, *"Let me take care of you, you have no idea what you mean to me"*.

It was neither the time nor the place for these words.

If he ever had those psychic powers he had faked in another life, Jane would have known how wrong he was about many things, about the time when he would say this or "It's over, it's done", about Sheriff Hardy, Red John and a million other things but since there never was such a thing as psychics he had no idea then.