

Walking The Plank By AmandaK

If he hadn't been there, John Kilmer would never have believed things could go *so* wrong so fast.

One minute, he and Mo are in the surveillance van, listening to Frankie pretending to be a senator's aide with access to security schematics, and the next—

He wants to block his ears so he can't hear any more. He wishes he could order Jelani to close the connection to Frankie's PPX. But he knows he can't.

In the warehouse, some maniac is screeching insults that carry over the airwaves to the van and to team in the Vault—*Americans are dogs, your women whores*—and threats against American mothers and sisters and daughters, and the shouting is almost (but not quite) loud enough to drown out the grunting and panting in the background, which mingles with the occasional snippet of Frankie begging them to stop in a voice that Kilmer's never heard from her before. Mo can't even look at him: he looks down at his hands resting near the keyboard with unseeing eyes, the horror Kilmer feels written on his features.

The next minute, Frankie is made. And their targets know it's game over.

Instead of giving up, or using her to try to escape, they make a fanatical last stand, wrapping retribution and message into one gruesome act, and there's nothing Kilmer can do to stop them.

His hands clench into fists at his sides as he struggles to suppress his every instinct that screams at him to rush in, guns blazing: *killthefuckersgetherout*. But he knows it would do no good. Even with Mo backing him up, they're heavily outnumbered and outgunned, and they long since lost the element of surprise. Going in *now* will only get everyone killed that much quicker. Backup team's mere blocks away and as long as the bastards are busy, Frankie has a chance to survive.

But at what price?

oOo

It feels to Kilmer as if an eternity goes by before their backup arrives, complete with stun grenades and assault rifles. Then it's over in seconds. Three dead, four men wounded, and they've got a warehouse filled with fresh intel for Jelani to process.

He scrambles over the wreckage, throwing aside overturned chairs, skirting broken glass and kicked-in doors, looking for Frankie. He finally finds her, huddling beneath a desk, long hair in tangled strands sticking to her down-turned face, bruised and bleeding, clothes torn to rags. She flinches as he reaches for her, and he curses beneath his breath, wishing he could kill the fucking son of a bitch who's done this to her all over again.

But he suppresses his anger, and keeps his voice low and steady. "It's me," he says. "It's over. You're safe."

She tilts her face up, for a moment unsure and confused but then recognition sets in and she nods. She allows him to help her out from under the desk, wrap her in a blanket and carry her to a waiting ambulance. He goes with her to the hospital, telling Mo over the radio to handle the on-scene aftermath.

It's not how things are supposed to be done, but right now, Kilmer could care less about protocol.

At the hospital Frankie suffers the attention and probing of doctors and nurses without a word. She nods or shakes her head as they ask questions, obeys quietly when they examine her, but Kilmer can tell she wants for nothing more than the prodding and poking to be over so she can go home.

At last, the doctors are satisfied that they have collected all the samples and evidence they need and that Frankie suffered no life-threatening injuries. They give her a bottle of pills —*"to help you sleep"*—and a handful of flyers, and tell her she's free to go.

Kilmer pockets the bottle and drops the flyers in the nearest trash—the average rape counselor doesn't have the proper security clearance, and they got damned good psychiatrists on staff besides— and bundles her into a cab. He takes her back to her place, where she disappears into the bathroom right away. A minute later the shower starts running.

Unsure if she wants him to go or stay, he roams her apartment aimlessly, realizing he hasn't seen the inside once since the divorce. He's surprised to find a few photos of them together hanging in frames on her walls, pictures taken in better times. And as he's done so often before, he wonders where they went wrong.

Half an hour passes, and Frankie doesn't reappear. Kilmer heads for the bathroom doorway and listens. The shower's running.

It's still running ten minutes later, on his next round past the bathroom, and he raises a

hand, ready to knock, but drops it before it can connect. Another five minutes pass, and he finds he can no longer suppress his concerns. Kilmer raps the door.

"Frankie? You okay in there?"

She doesn't reply, and all he hears is the sound of clattering water. He debates with himself for another minute, but finally musters enough courage to push the door open.

The bathroom's fogged up, thick with steam from the shower and at first he can't make out anything but blurry shapes and shadows. But then the mist lifts a little, and Frankie's curled in on herself in the shower stall, knees drawn up to her chest, shivering beneath the stream that's growing cold as the hot water runs out.

"Dammit," Kilmer swears softly, reaching up to turn off the water. He searches the bathroom, quickly locating towels in a cabinet near the sink and snatches one. He wraps it around her trembling body, ignoring how wetness seeps through his own shirt and pants.

He lifts her as lightly as a child, and she clings to him as he carries her into her bedroom, where he sets her down on the bed. He finds the bottle of pills the hospital provided and shakes a couple out onto his palm.

Realizing there's no glass on the bedside table, he offers, "I'll get you some water," and turns away.

She snatches his sleeve. "Don't go."

They're the first words out of her since he's found her, and a part of Kilmer rejoices at that.

"Please, hold me."

He puts the pills on the table and hesitantly sinks down on the mattress next to her, wrapping his arms around her, all the time on the alert for any signal that what she really wants is for him to leave her be. But Frankie settles easily against his chest, strands of wet hair sticking to him. He pulls her down with him and lies spooned around her for a long while, the occasional shiver running through her frame, until at last he believes she's fallen asleep.

But as soon as he tries to move, Frankie shifts, turning half over onto her back. "Kilmer? Make love to me."

At first, he thinks he's misheard her, his mind playing tricks on him. He shakes his head. "I shouldn't..."

But Frankie interrupts him. "Please? I want... I need..." She takes a deep breath, squeezing her eyes shut for a moment. "It hurts," she whispers when she looks at him again. "I want... want it to hurt in a good way."

Kilmer hesitates, knowing this is an extremely bad plan. He looks down on her, trying to read her mind. She's never been an open book to him, but the Frankie he sees now is someone he doesn't even recognize. "You should get some rest," he says, again reaching for the pills. Her hand on his arm stops him.

She shakes her head. "I keep... keep seeing..." The rest of her words die on a shuddering breath.

"Ssh," he whispers, "I'm here."

"Please, Kilmer," she mumbles, fingers curled around his wrist, holding him so tight her nails dig into his flesh.

He doesn't want to, but he can no longer stand seeing her like this, and the desperate, naked plea in her voice is hard to resist. He finds his free hand going to the towel's folds almost by itself and he tugs it open a little. He dips his head, not wanting to look at the bruises and contusions on her skin but finding them unerringly with his mouth, kissing her gently.

Frankie utters a soft sigh, a light breath that ripples through his hair before she lets go of his arm and instead folds her hands around his head and guides it a little to the side. He takes the hint and wraps his lips around a small nipple that instantly perks up in his mouth. He suckles it briefly, before he moves on to the other breast, body tense, half-expecting she'll push him away any second.

But she doesn't.

He pulls the towel apart further until she's laid bare before him. Dark, finger-shaped bruises show on her thighs and he glares at them until he notices how she's quivering with tension. He reaches for the towel, guilt making his hands shake, but Frankie's voice stops him.

"Don't," she says quietly. She reaches up, fumbles with his belt and zipper before slipping a hand into his pants. His body responds to her touch instantly, despite himself, but he pulls her hand away.

"I want..." she says, and it sounds almost like a sob.

"Not yet," he murmurs. She's far from ready.

He inches down on the bed and lowers his head, lips and tongue playing over the bruises on her legs as if that will make them go away. He nips a line of butterfly kisses along her hipbone and in the crease where her thigh begins before he reaches her slit. She feels hot and raw and hisses when his tongue dips in. She's taut as a bow string beneath his hands and he glances up to meet her eyes, silently asking her if it's still okay. She gives a slight nod and lets her head fall back on the pillow.

He continues to work on her, pushing all thought of the earlier night out of his mind. It takes a while and he's about to give up—this *has* to be the dumbest idea ever—but finally he feels her relax around and beneath him. She's moist and slick now, and he climbs off the bed to scoot out of his clothes and dig up a condom. He hates that—it's Frankie, after all, his wife—but the rational part of him insists that if he's going through with this insanity, at least he should take some precautions.

He's only half-hard, misgivings and memories interfering with his body's ability, and for a brief moment he wonders if he shouldn't leave it as is. He knows Frankie well enough that he could get her off with just mouth and hands.

"John?"

He sighs and tears open the package; he also knows it's not about her getting off. It's not even about *him*; she's looking for something else. Something he's not sure he can give her. Hell, he's not even sure it *exists*.

With a few expert strokes, he gets himself hard and quickly rolls on the condom. He turns back and rests his weight on his arms as he repositions himself between her legs. "Sure you want this?" he asks one last time, half-hoping she'll say no. "If you want me to stop, tell me. I'll stop, no matter what."

She gazes up at him, her eyes wide and gleaming, scanning his face. He knows what she's doing: trying to replace the memories with new ones, the image of him hovering over her overlaying that of the animals that raped her. He also knows, as she must, that things just don't work that way. But perhaps it'll work for a little while; perhaps it'll give her some peace of mind for a few hours, long enough for her to get some sleep.

She nods, wordless again, and he enters her slowly. Despite his care, she whimpers in pain. He stops instantly, but her fingers dig into his buttocks, urging him on and he

pushes deeper until he's buried inside her to his balls and can go no further. She heaves a deep breath.

"You okay?"

"Yes," she murmurs, eyes overflowing with tears, but there's also a hint of a triumphant smile around her lips and a bit of color has returned to her cheeks.

Kilmer begins to move again, slow and steady, gradually picking up the pace until he's moving at a fast clip. Frankie is breathing quickly now, gasping hiccups of air, and her hands claw into the sheets, opening and closing. Kilmer recognizes her tells and wriggles a hand between their bodies until he can rub a finger over her clit. She cries out, arching up against him and her eyes flutter shut. It's almost too much and he waits until she's come back down before he slips out of her and drops to the side, breathing heavily. His balls ache, and he knows he'll pay the price later, but now is not the time to worry about himself.

She snuggles closer, resting her head in the hollow of his shoulder. "Thank you," she mutters, her breath hot against his chest. A minute later, her breathing evens out and he knows she's asleep.

Trying not to jar her, Kilmer struggles with the bed covers and manages to pull the blankets up over them. He settles into a more comfortable position, staring up at the ceiling and waiting for morning, when he's sure the shit will *really* hit the fan.

oOo

Although he hadn't believed he'd be able to, he must have fallen asleep, because the next thing Kilmer notices is the gray light of early dawn filtering through Frankie's curtains.

She's still in his arms, nestled against him, murmuring something and shifting while she wakes up. He raises himself a little and watches how her eyes flutter open. She blinks, and for a long moment she stares up at him drowsily. He can tell the exact moment when the memories hit: horror floods her gaze and her mouth opens in a silent *oh*.

"Kilmer." She pushes off and rolls out of his arms. She sits up, her back to him. "You better go," she mumbles, a tremor in her voice.

"Frankie...?"

She shakes her head, not speaking, and shrugs him off when he reaches out to touch her shoulder.

That *hurts*.

Kilmer heaves a sigh. It's not like he didn't know it was a terrible idea to begin with or wasn't expecting she'd regret it in the morning, but still... He clambers off the bed and struggles into his wrinkled clothes, still a little damp from when he carried her out of the shower.

He ties his shoes, finds his jacket, and all that time Frankie sits stiffly on the edge of the bed, shoulders hunched high. Strands of her hair hang forward, hiding her face.

He feels as if he should say something, apologize perhaps, but *damn it*, it hadn't been his idea. "I'll go now," he says softly, and she nods without looking up. "I'll send someone by later, to see if you need anything, all right?"

Again, Frankie nods. Her naked back, the bruises standing out starkly, is the last thing he sees before he quietly shuts the door behind him.

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