HOMECOMING

EPISODE 31

Hold on… What'd you just say?

You heard me, Benji.

I don't think I did. Because I *thought* I heard you say you want me to help you give over some poor bastard to the same people who did this to you.

Oh, good, so you *are* listening.

Are you out of your fucking mind? You want me to help you... what? Hand someone over to be tortured? Mutilated? What the hell, Chris!

It's not about what I want, Ben. It's about what I have to do. Bella gave me nine months to find someone. That was the deal. That's the price for my freedom and for keeping Kayla safe. I was so close to having this over and done with, and then your fellow officers snatched me up for soliciting, and I lost so much damn time playing house with Kayla—

You weren't playing house! She's your fiancée.

She was Christopher's fiancée. And she's *your* girlfriend.

We… We aren't… I mean, we aren't official or anything.

Wow, seriously? Fucking typical.

Don't change the subject. This is insane! You're talking about kidnapping, forced surgery, sexual slavery - and you want me to be an accomplice? I'm a cop, for Christ's sake! I took an oath to protect people, not deliver them to monsters! What you're describing isn't justice, it's revenge. It's become exactly what Bella did to you!

And as a cop, you've watched how many rapists walk free? How many predators get slaps on the wrist? How many victims never get justice because the system is broken? I've been a woman for a few months in the real world, and I've already lost count of how many times I've been groped, followed, threatened. Your system doesn't protect us. It protects *them*.

Look, the law isn't perfect. You're right, sometimes it fails. But this won't make anything better.

I'm not trying to make anything *better*, Ben. That's the difference between me and Christopher. He thought the world could be fixed. He believed in justice, fairness, doing the right thing. You know where that idealism got him? Castrated in a basement. The reason he ended up down there is because he stopped to help someone. A stranger crying outside a hospital. He saw someone in pain and he couldn't walk away. That compassion, that naive belief that good people doing good things would be rewarded? That's what destroyed him, and I won't make the same damn mistake.

The world isn't fair, Benji. It's not just. It doesn't reward kindness or punish cruelty unless you make it. And if you keep pretending otherwise - if you keep playing by rules that only you follow - you don't just lose. You get annihilated. So no, I'm not trying to make the world better. I'm trying to survive it. There's a difference. All you can hope to do is carve out your own little slice of it and defend everyone inside that slice with everything you have.

I thought you wanted my help taking down the operation. Not this. Not... God, Kris. I can't be part of this.


We're done here. I don't know who you are anymore – and I don't think you do, either.
You're already a part of it, Ben. Sit down.
What're you talking about?

Sit. Down.

Tell me what the hell you're talking about first. You think the CPD is compromised?

Are you trying to be cute? Of course it's compromised! Half the cops are dirty, and the other half look the other way.

That's not—

How did your officers know exactly where to find me that night? Corner of Halsted and Division, at exactly 11:47 PM, soliciting a man in a silver Honda Civic?

Vice does sweeps. It happens.

Except it *wasn't* a sweep. It was two patrol officers responding to an anonymous tip. A tip that described me perfectly - down to what I was wearing and the fake name I was using with the client.

Only three people knew I was working that corner that night. Me, the Cunt... and whoever tipped off the police.

You think I... You think I'm working with them? That I'm... Jesus Christ, Kris. You actually think I'm part of this?

You didn't believe my story. You thought I was lying, that I'd transitioned voluntarily. You've been sleeping with my fiancée. You showed up at Alan's apartment at the exact right moment to intercept me. And now you're so eager to walk away when I need help?

I'm a cop! I've been trying to help you! The reason I didn't believe you at first is because I couldn't handle the idea that my best friend was being tortured and I didn't save him! The guilt was eating me alive, so yeah, I told myself it couldn't be true. That's not corruption, that's being human!

Then prove it. Help me find who in your department *is* working with Bella.

There's no one—

Someone knew where I'd be, Ben. Someone made sure I got arrested before I could complete my mission. Someone is protecting Bella's operation while making it look like they're investigating it. If it's not you, then who?

And here's what really bothers me - my kidnapping wasn't random. I wasn't picked up leaving a prostitute's apartment like the others. I was targeted. Outside a hospital where I volunteered. A med student, engaged, with a whole future ahead of me. It felt personal, Ben. Like someone wanted me specifically. Why? What made Christopher Bowman so special that Bella went out of her way to grab him?

Bzzzz, bzzzz, bzzzz

KAYLA

I have Chris. We're going to Kathy's. Hurry. He's is having a mental fucking breakdown.

Shit just got this - coming!

Sorry, might be the station.

What is it?

Nothing. Just... just a case update. It's not important.

Look, I'll stay. I'll hear you out. All of it.

You sure? Because you were just about to bolt.

You're my best friend. You deserve that much, at least. Now, uh, you were saying... about your kidnapping being personal. That someone targeted you specifically.

Alright. But I need you to really listen, Benji. Because once I tell you the rest, once you understand what I was doing those six weeks after I left Alan's after he proposed and why I need to finish this... you're going to have to make a choice.

What choice?

Whether you're going to help me survive, or whether you're going to try to save my soul. Because I promise you, Ben - only one of those options ends with me still breathing. And all it'll take is for us to make sure one truly deserving piece of shit gets exactly what he's earned.

But don't jump ahead. We're still at the good parts – and I want to remember those, too.


That kiss was freedom.

It was the first thing I'd chosen in three years that was mine alone.


Pokémon
DuSTin
DuSTin
DuSTin
DuSTin
It wasn't the last.

We talked for hours. About everything and nothing. Basketball, his work, Dustin's recovery. Normal things that felt revolutionary.

But eventually...

...we ran out of things to say.

I... I bought this with my own money. Just for you.

Kris, you didn't need to—

I know. That's the point. I *wanted* to. Do you understand?

I wanted to see that look on your face when you saw me like this. I wanted to see your... reaction.

God, you're beautiful.

In the basement, everything I wore was chosen for me. Every piece of lingerie was part of the performance. But this? I picked this out. I stood in that store and imagined your reaction. And now I get to see it.

This is mine to give. And I'm giving it to you.

Thank you.

I... Before we... You should know that I'm... down there, I still have...

Kris, I know. It's okay.

It's not the same as in the basement. The lighting was always dim there. You couldn't see everything. And I was always... performing. Making sure you only saw what you were supposed to see. But here, in your bedroom, in daylight... What if you see me differently? What if seeing all of me, really seeing me, makes you realize I'm just... just a man playing dress-up?

Hey. Look at me. You think I didn't notice before? That I couldn't tell? Kris, I've known from the start. And it never mattered to me then, and it doesn't matter now.

But you never saw—

I saw enough. I felt enough. And more importantly, I know you. Not just your body, but *you*. The woman who saved my son's life. Who survived hell and still found the courage to meet me at an aquarium with a stuffed Flounder.

You're the most beautiful woman I've ever known. And I want all of you. Every part. Even the parts that scare you.

I've been almost naked in front of hundreds of men. I've done things I can't even think about without feeling sick. But I've never been this terrified. Because with them, it didn't matter what they saw. With you... God, Alan, it matters so much.

Then let it matter. Let yourself be scared. You don't have to be brave right now. You don't have to perform. Just be here. With me.

I don't know if I even remember how to want something this much on my own.

You're doing it right now. Honestly, I'm nervous, too – that you'll be bigger than me.

Ha. Trust me, that's *not* a problem anymore.

I can't... I can't look at you right now. I need you to say something, but I can't watch your face when you see me like this. Is that stupid?

It's not stupid.

In the basement, I learned to read every micro-expression. Every flicker of disappointment or disgust or surprise. I became an expert at seeing what men really thought when they looked at my body. And right now, I can't handle knowing what you're thinking. So just... tell me. Please.

I'm thinking that you're shaking. That you've been strong for so long, and right now you're letting yourself be vulnerable. And that's the bravest thing I've ever seen. I'm thinking that every inch of you is beautiful. The parts that make you comfortable and the parts that don't. The scars you can see and the ones you can't.

You're not... disappointed?

No, I'm honored. That you trust me enough to stand here like this. That you chose me to be the first person you're naked with as a free woman. Also, uh, I'm thinking that you're way, way, *way* out of my league.

I don't know how to do this. How to be wanted without being used. How to give myself to someone without it being taken from me.

There's no pressure. And you want to know something? I'm terrified too. I haven't been with anyone since Yvette, and I have no idea what I'm doing. What if I'm not... enough for you?

Oh, I don't think *that* will be a problem.

Hey, now!

Kiss me. Kiss me like I'm yours.

You are mine. If you'll have me.

Prove it. Right now.



Wait. I need to tell you something. This is... I've never done this before. Not like this. I've done everything else, but never... In the basement, this wasn't part of my services and before… I was only with women.

Oh. Then we should take this slow. I'll be gentle, we can—

No. Don't you dare treat me like I'm fragile. This is mine. My first time choosing this, wanting this. And I don't want gentle.

Kris, I just don't want to hurt—

Listen. I need you to want me so much you forget to be gentle. I need you to take me like I'm yours. Like you've been dying for this. Because I have been. God, I've been thinking about this for months. About what it would feel like to have you inside me, to give myself to someone because I wanted to, not because I had to.

You're sure?

I've never been more sure of anything. So stop asking permission and just fuck me, Alan. *Now.*





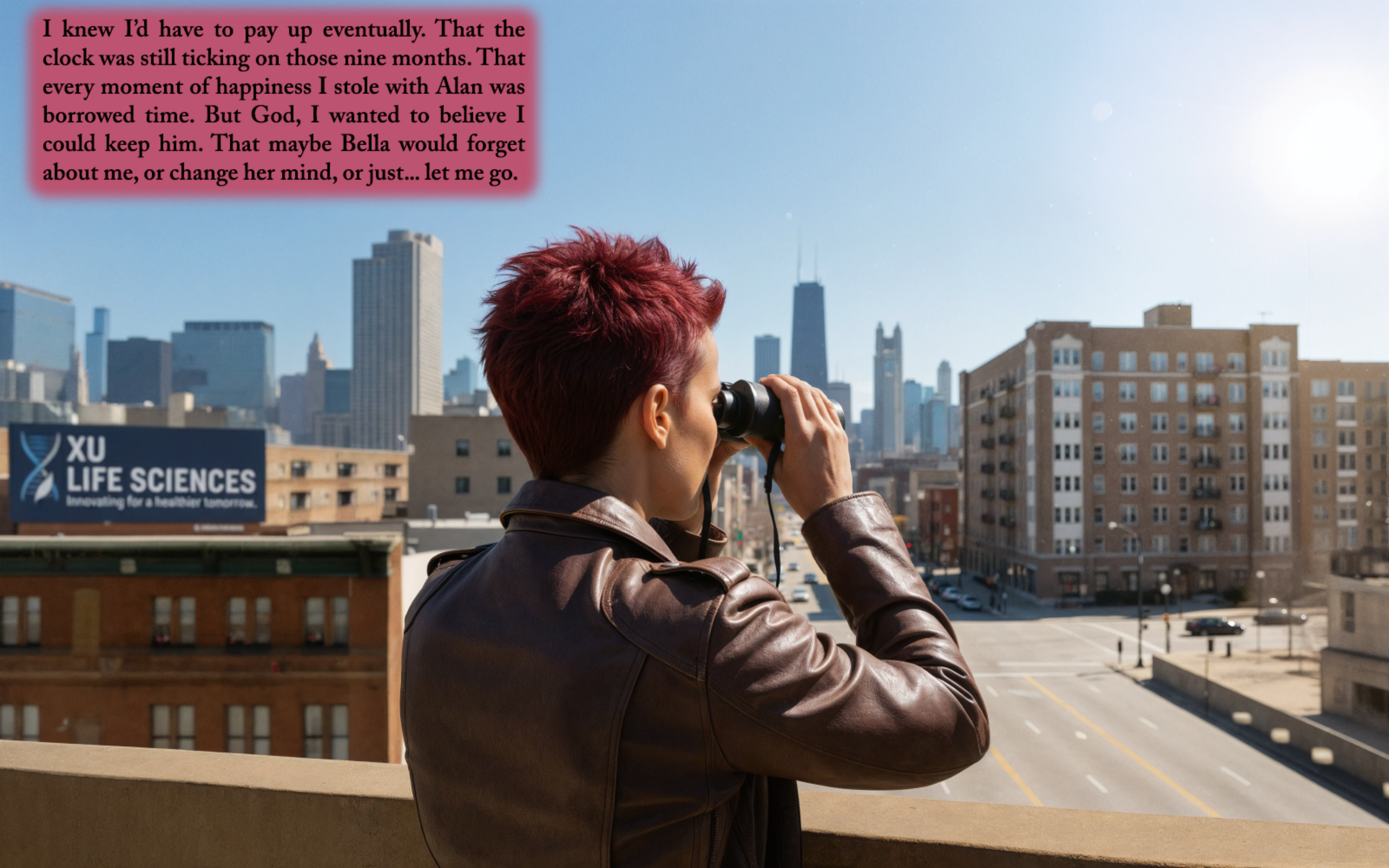




I'll spare your delicate sensibilities the details, Benji. But I will say this - Chicago never looks more beautiful than when you're pressed against a window on the seventh floor, the skyline stretched out before you, while the man you love makes you forget every horrible thing that came before.

For those few hours, I almost believed I could have it. A normal life. A man who loved me. A future that didn't involve basements or points or finding replacements. Almost.

I knew I'd have to pay up eventually. That the clock was still ticking on those nine months. That every moment of happiness I stole with Alan was borrowed time. But God, I wanted to believe I could keep him. That maybe Bella would forget about me, or change her mind, or just... let me go.



I was an idiot. Bella doesn't forget. And the Cunt sure as hell doesn't forgive.