No Rest for the Ex-Thief

by Adapted_Batteries

Summary

Ezekiel attempts to head home for the night after an exhausting day, but Stone’s got something he wants to talk about first.

Set a little after “And the Christmas Thief.”

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

After the impromptu Christmas/Welcome Back party for Eve, Flynn, and Jenkins, Ezekiel was ready to fall face first in his bed and sleep for the next week. Of course, a certain cowboy wasn’t going to let him have his well deserved rest.

He knew Stone had followed him. Ezekiel had ducked out of the party before the eye contact could grow into something more than a quick glance, but he didn’t bother acknowledging it, hoping he could actually sneak out and avoid whatever Stone clearly wanted to say. He enjoyed the growing silence as the Christmas music from Jenkins’s records faded the farther they walked, replaced with the surprisingly matched, rhythmic footfalls from both of them.

Stone apparently couldn’t hold in his question any longer once they got to the main room in the Annex. “Jones...can I talk to you for a bit?”

Ezekiel slowly turned around, hoping Stone would see how tired he was and would drop it. Either Stone couldn’t tell he was exhausted, or was ignoring it; he gently, but firmly, grabbed Ezekiel’s arm before he could back up far enough out of Stone's reach.
“Ezekiel, please, it won’t be long.”

Ezekiel raised an eyebrow at his first name. No one but Cassandra ever called him by it unless it was serious. “Okay, but make it quick. I’ve had a hell of a day.”

Stone snorted, smiling a little before going serious again. “I’m...sorry about earlier, with the whole chasing you around and stuff. It was, uh, well, I certainly didn’t expect you to be on your knees begging.”

He may have been tired, but Ezekiel couldn’t resist poking a little fun at him. “Bet you enjoyed that sight, cowboy,” Ezekiel smirked.

Momentarily stunned, Stone’s mouth attempted to form some words, but never made it to saying them. Ezekiel decided to give him a moment to recover. “It won't happen again, the whole bringing people in the Library who can steal things. I learned my lesson.”

“What I was going to say was I'm apologizing because if I had done something stupid, I’d want to keep it hidden from Baird and them too. It's unfair of me to act like I would be all upfront and truthful about it,” Stone clarified, looking anywhere but at Ezekiel until he finished his statement.

Ezekiel blinked, not sure how to respond to the sincerity. “Uh, thanks, apology accepted?” With all the bearing of his desperation to Cassandra and Stone, and his past to his mom, his brain decided he didn’t need to think before he spoke. “If anything, I should be the one apologizing for dragging you guys into my mess,” Ezekiel started, mimicking Stone's lack of eye contact, “and probably for the spontaneous kiss of gratefulness that I about gave you, which you clearly weren’t in to.”

Stone, once again mildly shocked, attempted to say something; it took a few tries, but he got there. “Well I mean, I was concerned and confused because you were acting really weird, and you coming at me, well I was shoving you away before I realized, and then–” He shut his mouth like he had said too much already, but before Ezekiel could even think of a response, Stone continued, “not that I'm-I don't care who you like an’ all, it just...uh...startled me.”

Ezekiel laughed, more at himself than at Stone, as he leaned against a desk. “Not how I intended to come out.”

“Thanks for trusting me with this,” Stone said, sitting on the edge of the desk.

“It’s not like it’s a secret,” Ezekiel retorted a bit more aggressively than he intended. Ezekiel was having a bit of a hard time managing Stone’s raw caring, so he intently stared at his clasped, fidgeting hands in front of him. “I mean, before I came to the Library, I didn’t bother hiding. Thieves don’t really care about stuff like that. I didn’t mean to hide it here, but I dunno, it never came up, so I never said anything.” He looked up to see Stone watching him like he was afraid of doing something to make Ezekiel bolt.

Suddenly Stone being a few feet away from him was too close. Ezekiel stood up slowly, careful to not startle Stone into grabbing his arm again. He relieved his sudden need to move by pacing in front of the desk, hoping he wouldn’t let anything slip about why he hadn’t actually said anything. It wasn’t like he could tell Stone that he had a crush on him, and after the whole Cassandra and Estrella thing, he hoped something could happen.

He realized he spent the last thirty seconds silently pacing, so he stopped and turned to Stone. That concerned look from earlier, which Ezekiel last saw when he was on his knees begging, was creeping back onto the cowboy’s face. “It’s not that I don’t trust you guys. I guess, I didn’t want to deal with...a bad reaction.” Ezekiel kicked himself for hesitating, because he knew Stone saw right
Stone shook his head. “You know we wouldn’t, especially Cassandra. What’s the real reason?” Ezekiel wanted to explain, give in to his feelings, but his throat strongly protested forming any words related to it. “You don’t have to talk if you don’t want, I get it, it’s personal. But I’m always here for you, know that,” Stone continued. “I know it might not be a big deal to you, but hiding yourself isn’t healthy...I should know.”

Ezekiel froze, confused look on his face clear as day. Hope welled in his chest, but he shoved it back down. “At least we can appreciate your brains more than your dad ever would,” Ezekiel said, hoping Stone would confirm that’s what he was talking about so Ezekiel’s heart could chill out.

Maybe Ezekiel had too much of Jenkins’s eggnog, but he could’ve sworn Stone deflated a little like Ezekiel missed something. Fortunately for Ezekiel, Stone wasn’t going to leave him wondering. “I wasn’t talking about my talent.”

“Oh,” was all Ezekiel could manage. Any exhaustion was now flushed out of his veins; he sat on the edge of the desk, mirroring Stone, to prevent his knees from wobbling from the hope rushing in full force.

Stone bit his lip, breathing deep before explaining. “I didn’t tell anyone for a long time. Growing up in Oklahoma, I thought I was broken...wrong. Pop sure couldn't find out I liked boys too, I'd be deader than dead. So I kept it hidden, played my part, stayed safe. But you know what happened?” Stone waited for Ezekiel to shake his head. “Someone decided to trust me with their secret. When Slaten came out to me, I realized I didn’t have to be so scared, I had someone who trusted me with something I was afraid of even admitting to myself.”

Realization flooded Ezekiel’s head as he remembered his interactions with Slaten. The looks, the concern, the care, it all made so much sense. Apparently Stone realized Ezekiel was having an epiphany; he smiled at him, chuckling a little before continuing. “We had a thing, for awhile, but Slaten wasn’t comfortable with me continuing to isolate myself by not leaving, especially as he watched me waste my extraordinary talent by being an oil rigger.”

Ezekiel whistled. “No wonder you were so grouchy about not having connections outside the Library. He’s a good dude,” Ezekiel found himself saying, but he couldn’t help feeling a bit sad Stone had feelings for another man.

“That he is,” Stone exhaled. “I can’t say I’m willing to give this life up, but I know it’d make him damn proud to know what I’m doing.” Stone stood up, apparently ready to head back to the Christmas party.

“I’m proud of you,” Ezekiel blurted. He wasn’t sure if he was trying to get Stone to stay or if he was immensely glad Stone just trusted him with something only one other person apparently knew. Either way, it got Stone to stop in his tracks and look at Ezekiel. “It’s not like I can give you shit for having a comfy facade. I know how hard it is to finally feel safe enough to let it go completely.” Ezekiel stood up, sudden rush of bravery fueling him. “And, I know what it’s like to want something you can’t have.”

Stone raised his eyebrows, gears clearly turning in his head. “Do ya now? And what makes you think you can’t have him?” Stone asked, voice getting tauntingly husky as he talked. Ezekiel’s eyes went wide, jaw a bit slack in shock. Stone couldn’t help but snicker at him. “If there’s anything you should take away from our talk, is that sometimes a little step in faith goes a long way.”

Cocky Ezekiel finally decided to return. “To be fair, it would’ve been a lot easier if you hadn’t
shoved me away. You can’t go giving mixed signals like that, mate.” Stone looked genuinely abashed for a moment, but Ezekiel didn’t let him suffer long. “Hmm, how convenient Cassandra made you put that mistletoe up above the door...maybe you could redeem your mistake.”

Stone held his hand out to Ezekiel. “Gladly, if you’ll let me.”

Ezekiel waited a moment before grabbing his hand, trying to hide just how eager he was. “Oh, definitely,” Ezekiel said as Stone led him to the doorway, a bit breathier than he intended. Stone didn’t seem to mind at all as he cupped Ezekiel’s face with his hands, looking at the ex-thief so fondly it was making Ezekiel want to melt onto the floor; it was enough to get Ezekiel to close the small distance between them before Stone could actually kiss him.

After a few moments Stone pulled away slightly. “Hey, I was supposed to be kissin’ you.”

“Heh, sorry, got a bit, carried away,” Ezekiel said, slightly out of breath because he’d forgotten to breathe. “But, uh, you can do that now.”

Stone gave an amused huff mixed with what Ezekiel thought sounded almost like a growl, then kissed him.

Ezekiel wasn’t exactly sure how long they spent doing that, but it was long enough to have Stone press him against the door frame by the time Flynn cleared his throat down the hall, making them both jump. Stone backed off of him a bit, but was still quite close, nothing like his reaction to the attempted grateful kiss earlier.

“I, uh, told Eve you two were fine, but she made me go check anyway and…” Flynn rambled, face turning a bit red.

“It’s fine, Flynn,” Stone said, reaching out for Ezekiel’s hand. “We were just heading back.” He glanced at Ezekiel, waiting for a response.

Ezekiel thought for a moment before taking Stone’s hand, wondering maybe if he stayed a bit longer, he could get a certain cowboy to come home with him. The train of thought quickly went to some areas that made Ezekiel blush without realizing it, earning a knowing grin from Stone.

“Sure you were,” Flynn retorted, glancing at their hands. “I mean, heh, um, uh, coming, Eve!” The Librarian quickly turned on his heels and sped back into the Library as if he’d been called, though there definitely had been no call.

Ezekiel started walking after him, but Stone stayed put, yanking him back slightly. “You okay with this? I know it’s a lot, even with people you trust,” Stone said.

“What? I’m definitely okay with this. I’m sooo okay with his you wouldn’t believe,” Ezekiel replied, internally kicking himself when he heard how giddy he was. He felt a little better when Stone chuckled and squeezed his hand.

“Allright. Let’s go make everyone’s night, then.”

They certainly made everyone’s night, but especially Cassandra, who conspicuously received ten dollars from a slightly disappointed, but happy nonetheless Jenkins.

End Notes
Post Notes: I have no clue why season 4 is providing so much fodder for ships and backstory like this...but I'm not gonna question it one bit. And of course Slaten is mentioned, I mean he knew about Stone's brain...there had to be something there, one sided or reciprocated.

Stone’s history of hiding in Oklahoma is sort of fueled by my experience. Growing up in the Bible Belt, being anything other than cishet is a scary, confusing thing. I thought I was messed up for a long while, then finally came to terms with myself when I found a term that actually fit who I was, and I felt a lot better when I finally came out as non-binary to my best friend. Seriously, if you can safely share who you are, it's like a weight off your shoulders.

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