

Just Because

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Rating: PG

Summary: There was no reason at all. Aside from that tiny little fact he didn't bother to tell her. - *Smacked romance one shot*

Disclaimer: Nothing mine. Just borrowing them for a short time to let them have what they didn't on the show...

A/N: Saw a plot turtle (yup, it's turtles with me, because I love them) walking by and couldn't let the chance pass...

This is one of those half an hour quickies - where you have an idea and write "FIN" half an hour later. I hope this one works and you like it.

The first time it occurred was after Frankie had attacked her. She knew he cared about her, and that he was always there whenever she needed him. But this time was different. He brought her food, he checked on her, came by or at least called her, only to see if she was alright. He never stayed long and the phone calls never lasted more than a few minutes. But there was a persistent regularity to it, and some air of precision that she associated with him. It was what made it so comfortable. With every other person, it sooner or later would have annoyed her. With him, it felt natural; like the most normal thing in the world. Because he made it feel like this. He made *her* feel it. He was like a shadow, like a guardian angel; he gave her a sense of having someone close by should she need him; but he wasn't squashing her with attention.

It was somehow exactly what she expected from him.

Then, one day when he had just brought her some dinner and helped her with a bandage, she couldn't resist asking him. Why did he do all this, she wanted to know.

He looked at her, for a while, his eyes locked with hers, before he shrugged ever so slightly and answered: "Just because."

Days, weeks, months and even years went by. She became a person of interest for Drew Bedford - because Drew wanted to get to *him*. It wasn't about her; never had been about her. Or maybe it was; after all, she was his best friend. And who better to connect with than the best friend of an intended target?

She knew he felt somewhat guilty after what had happened with Drew, and that she had been made a part of it. Only because she was his friend. In a quiet moment, he even offered an apology, but she told him it wasn't necessary. He said he could never have forgiven himself if something would have happened to her, and more than once she reassured him that was okay. She hugged him and he hugged her back, and she assumed that everything was said and they could move on. But then she had fresh coffee on her desk the next morning. And the morning after. And the morning after that.

Every morning he would bring her coffee, sometimes even along with a bagel or a donut. And she would smile and thank him. They wouldn't talk about why he did it. She knew it anyways, and he knew that she knew it. She gave up telling him that there was no reason to feel guilty.

After a while, they both realized it wasn't about guilt or compensation or whatever one would call it anymore. It was a habit. Simply a habit, a gesture between friends; a gesture of appreciation and affection.

Still, she asked him this question she had asked him before - why. And again, his answer only consisted of the hint of a shrug and two words: "Just because."

They parted in anger when she took off to Greece. She had a responsibility; not because of her job and her sense of duty as a cop, but because of her roots and her conscience. She didn't care what the rules said; just this once, she only wanted to do what she felt was right. It was personal. Oh yes, it was indeed. And if he couldn't and wouldn't understand or accept it, then she would deal with it alone.

To say that she was surprised when he showed up in Greece would be an understatement. A big one. She had expected a lot of things, but certainly not him following her. As a friend, not as her supervisor, her boss. But then, he cared about her, said it himself and named it as reason for his presence; and that, on the other hand, didn't surprise her.

Again he was with her, at her side, supporting her and watching over her. Again, he didn't do it so that it was all that obvious - apart from the act of following her - but she knew and felt that he was there. She couldn't have asked for a better moral support.

He didn't offer an explanation this time either. It was the old game. They shared a quiet moment, sitting in a small café shortly before they had to head to the airport and back home. She asked the by now almost worn question, and he looked at her thoughtfully, seemingly contemplating to give another than the usual answer, before going for the well-known words once more: "Just because."

Leaving New York wasn't easy. In fact, it was the hardest decision she had ever had to make in her life. This was about leaving home. *Family*. The family she had found in her colleagues and friends. Still, she felt that she didn't have much of a choice. And so she left.

When she said goodbye to everyone the evening before her departure, she saw heart-breaking sadness in every pair of eyes of the friends surrounding her. Even in his; even he who always held his emotions so carefully concealed didn't bother to hide the sadness.

When he turned up at her doorstep a few months after she had left for New Orleans, she wasn't all that surprised. He had followed her half around the world before, after all - a trip through half the country was merely a stone's throw.

They enjoyed the time together, having not seen each other in a far too long while. They chatted as well as shared moments of comfortable silence; they took long walks, arms linked and laughter mingling; they ate together or had a coffee now and then. She showed him her work place and the city she was now living in, and he showed her - subtly so, in his very own way - how happy he was to finally spend some time with her again.

Her question, though not really necessary, still had to come at some time.

"Just because," he told her this time as well. She wanted to smile and shake her head at this stoic demeanor of his he always showed when it came to them and their friendship; a demeanor she had gotten so used to and loved so much about him. But then, all of a sudden, she heard him take another breath; one that was speaking of speech preparation. She looked up at him to see what he wanted to add; waiting for something more than those two words that had become strangely familiar and something like a code between them over the time.

He looked at her like he always did when they were alone - with his eyes full of affection and appreciation, care and just a bit of worry.

He touched her hand with his like he always did when no one else was around - gentle, light, almost shy, but still in a gesture that was deeply heart-warming.

He smiled at her like he always did when it was just the two of them - with one corner of his mouth pulled up the tiniest bit, and the lightest wrinkles around his eyes, wrinkles of honest happiness.

But he spoke to her with words she had never heard from him before, words she had never *expected* to hear from him.

"Because I love you."

FIN