

Title: When Two Rights Make A Wrong

Author: Scribblesinink

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href="<http://jericho.scribblesinink.com/2009/04/23/awesomejakeverse-master-post/>">Awesome!Jakeverse, the shared post-season 2 verse being written by Scribbler and Tanaqui. Set within Home Brew. Thanks to Tanaqui for the beta.

Summary: After he returns to Jericho with Jake, Chavez—once known as Lt. Parker—knows he'll have to have a talk with his former 'commanding officer', Major Beck.

When Two Rights Make A Wrong By Scribblesinink

After Jake and Colonel Davies had disappeared inside City Hall, with Heather scurrying on their heels, Chavez waited by the truck. He propped himself up against the fender, arms folded over his chest, legs crossed at the ankles, a picture of unconcern. He was good at waiting. Years of service had taught him near limitless patience, first in the Army, then the CIA. As the time passed, he idly watched Jericho bustle on around him. People criss-crossing Main Street shot him curious glances, gossiping to each other in low voices. He smiled inwardly. Used to be, his purpose was best served by being inconspicuous. Ironically, he and the truck—and no doubt, Jake's return—were now the center of attention. Nobody approached him, though; they all kept their distance. Which suited Chavez just fine.

A little over twenty minutes had gone by before Jake came storming out of City Hall as if the Cheyenne airforce were on his heels once again. His face was a thunderstorm: jaw clamped tight, eyes flashing angrily, as he hopped down the steps two at a time. Chavez tensed and straightened, alert and ready.

He relaxed again slightly as the blonde—Emily, Chavez recalled her name was—trotted up to Jake, startling him out of his fury as she threw herself in to his arms. Jake brushed her off after a few minutes, and then hurried in the direction Chavez recalled led to the medical center. Going to see his mother, he reckoned. He couldn't hold that against him. Not after what Jake'd said Beck had put the woman through.

Left behind, Emily stared after Jake, her demeanor a little bemused, a little hurt. *Interesting.* Chavez filed the little tidbit of observation away, having no idea to what purpose but finding old habits died hard.

After a few moments, Emily gave a small shake of the head, and continued on her way. Chavez relaxed further, once more leaning against the truck's fender, waiting.

Part of the reason he was waiting was that he reckoned someone should keep an eye on the truck. Jericho might've flipped the finger at Tomarchio and his cronies, but that didn't mean Chavez would trust every single one of its citizens blindly. Certainly not with a truck full of much-needed supplies sitting in the middle of Main Street. Not that he absolutely had to personally do the job, of course. He could've told the soldier waiting by the Humvee parked on the corner to watch the truck. Or grabbed a pair of Jericho's rangers and set them to guard it. He had plans of his own for the afternoon, after all: mainly paying Darcy Hawkins a courtesy visit, to tell her her husband had made it and would be okay. And maybe swinging by Bailey's. If he remembered correctly, Mary Bailey served a wicked brew—assuming she hadn't run out of beans, that was. And if she had, Chavez could offer her some of his personal stash, still hidden in his duffel in the truck behind him. With his own grinder shot to pieces during the run up here, wasn't much else he could do with it, anyway.

But before he did any of those things, he had another matter to deal with. Something he didn't want to postpone any longer than strictly necessary. And since that required he wait out here, he'd decided he might as well keep watch over the truck while he was at it.

Another twenty minutes or so after Jake had left, a small cluster of people filed out of City Hall. Narrowing his eyes to pierce the shade under the colonnade, Chavez identified each of them quickly. Gray Anderson, the mayor. Jake's brother Eric: Chavez chuckled wryly as he spotted the sheriff's star on Eric's chest. Job ran in the family, it seemed. Two young women: one was Heather and the other a tiny blonde he seemed to vaguely recall was a J&R rep. Looked like Beck and his men weren't the only ones throwing their lot in with Jericho.

Speaking of—where was the major? Chavez frowned, realizing he didn't see either Davies or Beck among the small group. He had been certain Beck was inside City Hall from the presence of the army Humvee with its driver waiting next to it.

Perhaps the major and colonel were having a powwow of their own, away from civilian ears?

The group who had emerged exchanged a few last words and then split up. Eric headed toward the truck, nodding at Chavez before he called over a few men and gave them instructions to offload the food and medicine but leave the gas and ammo for the army troops.

Chavez pushed up off the fender, intercepting Heather as she walked by. "Miss—?" He realized he didn't know her last name. "Heather?"

She paused, looking his way, a little startled, a little wary. "Yes?"

He spread his hands to show her he meant no harm. "I have a small favor to ask."

If anything, her wariness increased. "Yes?" she said again.

He explained to her how they'd met with a road gang on the way up from Texas and how a few shots had been fired. Her eyes widened in shock; clearly, Jake hadn't had the chance to tell her about it yet. As Chavez continued to tell her about his broken coffee grinder, and how Jake had said Heather owned a hand crank, her cheeks pinked a little: almost imperceptibly,

but Chavez was more hawk-eyed than most.

In the end, she agreed to lend him the use of her grinder in exchange for him sharing his precious beans with her. It wasn't a hard bargain to agree to; what better way to pass the time than sharing a good brew with a pretty woman?

She was giving him directions to her house when he again detected movement at City Hall's steps. Glancing across from the corner of his eye, he saw the colonel and Major Beck had emerged. "I'll be by later, with the beans," he promised, a little distracted.

With a nod of agreement, Heather said her goodbyes and walked off. Chavez turned fully toward the stairs.

Beck spotted him as he reached the bottom step, stiffening slightly. He halted and they stood looking at one another. Chavez waited, leaving the initiative to the major. He was fully prepared to have this conversation right here and now, but it wouldn't do any good if Beck wasn't ready for it as well. So he had to let Beck come to him.

After a few moments, ignoring the Humvee and its driver, who'd snapped to attention in expectation, Beck made a beeline straight for Chavez. He stopped a foot or two away. Chavez had a few inches on him, but that had never stopped Beck from commanding a conversation. "Lieutenant Parker," he said coolly, his tone telling Chavez that Beck knew the name had belonged to another man. "You look well for a dead man."

Chavez recalled the last time he'd talked to Beck and what he'd said when the major had asked him who he was. Had asked him, with the hurt he felt at 'Parker's' betrayal barely concealed, what had been in the conference room that was so important. Back then, Chavez couldn't tell him, and it would've been of no use if he'd tried. By now, he reckoned, he no longer needed to: the major knew. Perhaps not every detail, but enough. Enough that he'd turned his back on Cheyenne and thrown his lot in with Jericho.

"It's Chavez, Major."

Beck nodded his acceptance, and Chavez waited for what he'd do or say next. He'd known he'd have to confront Beck—let Beck confront him—realizing as soon as he made the decision to go back to Jericho with Jake that it would be unavoidable. They'd need to clear the air and figure out where they stood, on a personal level as well as a professional one. After all, Beck had plenty reason to be upset: Chavez had fooled the guy for over a month, wormed his way into Beck's personal staff and gained his trust. They'd fought side by side as they were clearing the Nebraska highways from road gangs and rabble, and even, once, when they'd found themselves confronting a family of cannibals. At the same time, they'd been on opposing sides, though only one of them had known it.

Beck looked Chavez up and down. Then he apparently decided to meet the issue head on. No surprise, really: in those weeks he worked for Beck, Chavez had never seen the major beat about the bush. "Mr Chavez, you cost me three of my men. Good, *American* soldiers."

Chavez didn't miss the slight stress on the word *American*. "They're dead?" he asked quietly.

That hurt. "I'm sorry, I tried—." He stopped there. He *had* tried. Even as he'd wriggled the small key Jake had slipped him into the cuff locks, he'd been acutely aware the men guarding him weren't the enemy. Not really. They were Americans, like him. They'd just ended up on the wrong side of the line.

Beck nodded once, a curt dip of the head. Chavez briefly shut his eyes.

He'd also known he had no choice. The stakes had been too high and he hadn't been able to afford to take chances. No matter what, he'd had to make sure those men were out long enough for him to get away before someone raised the alarm. If he'd ended up in Loomer Ridge instead of Texas—well, the outlook for a satisfying resolution would've been a lot grimmer than it already was. No, considering the alternatives, he'd done what had to be done.

That didn't make those deaths sit any lighter on his conscience, though. He'd always known he'd killed the soldier sitting next to him in the back of the Humvee. But he'd hoped—he'd tried to hold back with the other two. Not go all out. Incapacitate them without killing them. It would seem he'd failed.

He opened his eyes again. "Did you ship their bodies back home, to their families?" he asked.

Beck arched an eyebrow. "Corporal Wolfe's we did." His tone was clipped. "Told his mother he died in the line of duty, protecting his country...." His voice trailed off a moment before he went on softly, "But that wasn't true, was it?"

Chavez blinked. Beck might've abandoned Cheyenne, dismissed Tomarchio's claim to the presidency. But this, an open admission he and his men had been on the wrong side, was still unexpected. "I guess not," he answered. "Not really." He scrubbed a hand over his neck. "I'm sorry."

Beck glanced away a moment, past Chavez' shoulder to where Colonel Davies had joined Eric in overseeing the unloading of the truck. "We've all done regrettable things." His words were so quiet that Chavez picked them up only at the edge of his hearing. He blinked again, startled despite everything by the pain in the major's voice.

For a long moment, he and Beck seemed to exist in a place of their own, a bubble of regret outside the real world. Dimly, behind him, Chavez heard the voices of the men carrying supplies from the truck into what had been the J&R office building further down the street, but they sounded a long way off.

Then Beck cleared his throat and the spell was broken. "We buried the other two in Jericho. PFC Arroyo came from San Diego; Sergeant Vang from Chicago."

Chavez nodded, understanding what Beck wasn't saying: they'd had no families left to arrange a funeral. "I'd like to visit their graves," he said softly.

Beck gave him a hint of a smile. "I expected you might." He turned a little, indicating the Humvee with a flick of his hand. "Hop in. It's on the way back to Camp Delaware." He

paused a moment. "And I believe my intelligence people will want to debrief you."

Chavez hesitated, glancing back at the truck. He shook his head. "Thanks for the offer. I'll pay my respects later." Beck's brows knitted together and he opened his mouth: to object or to ordain, Chavez wasn't sure. Forestalling him, Chavez quickly added, "But I'll swing by the camp, after." Beck did have a point: it made sense for him to tell Beck's troops what he knew. Perhaps teach them a trick or two, while he was at it. But he wanted to be alone when he visited those men. Didn't want to have Beck looking over his shoulder. Besides, he had the living to speak with, first: Darcy Hawkins, Heather. Maybe Jake, if that thunderous look was anything to go by.

Beck studied Chavez a moment, before he gave another of his quick nods. "Certainly." He turned away and took a step toward the Humvee. Then he turned back. "Despite everything —," he offered Chavez a faint grimace, "it's good to see you back. If we're to survive—," another small pause, "Jericho needs men like you."

Chavez gave him a sloppy salute, the kind that would've had him reprimanded if he'd still been wearing Lt. Parker's uniform. It must've cost Beck a fair bit to admit that. "Right back at ya, Major. Right back at ya."

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