

MEET JAKE TANNER

Born: 28.03.1985

Height: 6'1"

Weight: 190lbs/86kg/13.5 stone

Physical Description: Brown hair, close shaven beard, brown eyes, slim athletic build

Education: Upper Second Class Honours in Psychology from the University College London (UCL)

Interests: When Jake isn't protecting lives and finding those responsible for taking them, Jake enjoys motorsports — particularly F1

Family: Mother, older sister, younger brother. His father died in a car accident when Jake was fifteen

Relationship Status: Currently in a relationship with Elizabeth Tanner, and he doesn't see that changing, ever

THE
CONFESSIO

JACK **PROBYN**

CLIFF^{TD}
PRESS_{SM}

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| PART 1 |





CHAPTER 1

POCKETS

ONE YEAR AGO

Elliot Bridger didn't think of himself as a bad man, but he was sure that others did. Almost certain of it, in fact. And what he was about to do – no, what he was being *forced* to do – would do nothing to change that perception.

Through a dense mist that had settled on the cul-de-sac, a single street lamp illuminated the one place he wanted it to: the home of the person whom he would begin to rely upon for so much.

Danika Oblak.

She'd left her house less than half an hour earlier, wearing that large, green River Island jacket she frequently chose when the weather was neither too hot nor too cold – like Goldilocks – clutching her bag close to her body as if she was afraid someone was about to leap from behind the bushes and steal it. On the balance of things, she had a greater chance

of being struck by lightning than being robbed.

Bridger knew exactly where she was going and what she would do when she got there. The past few days of surveillance had taught him everything he needed to know about her movements and habits. Now all he needed to do was wait for her return. Impatiently. He had some news he wanted to share.

The wait wasn't long.

Still clutching her bag, Danika emerged from the fog and scurried across the street, twisting her neck left and right. At the sight of her, Bridger clambered out of the car, closed the door and glided across the road. Pounced on her, using the darkness to his advantage, cutting her off just as she was about to turn into her driveway.

'E-Elliot,' she said, letting out a little gasp, her eyes wide. Her pale face was tinged a slight shade of orange, making her look more ill than she probably was. 'What are – what are you doing here?'

'I've come to see you.' He smiled insidiously. Something inside him had switched. Without realising it, he'd turned into the bad man everyone perceived him to be. If he was going to go through with this, he needed to tap into the darker side of his psyche.

'What do you want?'

'A chat.' With his hand wrapped around her arm, he ushered her closer to the door. She offered no resistance.

As they reached the house, Danika plunged her hand into her bag and found her keys. The house was a mess, unlike anything he'd had the pleasure of seeing – and he'd stepped into crack dens and some other ropery establishments.

The first thing Bridger noticed was the rancid stench. As though a dog had lived there, died there, and was now a permanent member of the furniture, left to rot and decay into the floorboards. The smell clung to Bridger's throat and made

him gag. Shoes were strewn across the floor carelessly. Coffee and soft drink stains soiled the wallpaper, which was beginning to peel by the ceiling and skirting. A skyscraper of post, magazines, flyers and leaflets was pushed against the wall, remnants scattered across the floor. As for the carpet, dirty. And as Bridger glanced down at it, he saw a woodlouse crawling amongst the fibres, probably running towards a cleaner hiding place. The sight of it made the skin on the back of his neck crawl.

‘Bet this place is cheap,’ he said, staring at the insect.

‘It’s a former student let,’ Danika said with defiance in her voice. ‘I live here because it’s cheap, gov.’

Bridger came to the sudden realisation that he was still holding her and let go.

‘We’re outside office hours,’ he said. ‘You know the rule: off duty, it’s Elliot. My mother gave me the name so we might as well use it. Just like she gave my brothers theirs, and your mother gave you yours.’

Danika set her bag on the floor and then kicked it behind her legs, shielding it from view. ‘What do you want, Elliot? Last time was a mistake. It can never happen again.’

Bridger moved forward. It was only minuscule – a slight shift in his stance – but it was enough to intimidate Danika. She retreated closer to the front door.

‘Relax. Please. I don’t want to hurt you.’

‘Then what do you want?’

‘I told you. A chat.’

Bridger’s eyes flickered to the bag on the floor, then he swooped down and reached for it. Danika attempted to defend it with her arms, but it was no use. Too deft, too strong, she was no match for him.

Once it was firmly in his grip, he hurried into the living room, ignoring Danika’s protestations.

‘Give it back! Elliot! Give it—’

He held his hand inches from her face. 'Quiet. Please.'

If she didn't stop shouting, the migraine would come back with a vengeance. Keeping his eyes locked on Danika's, he lowered his hand into the bag. *Time for some fishing.* At the top, he found two small bottles of vodka. Russian Standard. Thirty-eight per cent solution. Enough to put her to sleep for the rest of the night, despite her Eastern European heritage. Then he sifted through the rest of Danika's belongings. A purse. Lipstick. Pack of tissues. Pen. A bag of make-up. Until

There you are.

He removed what he was looking for and held it aloft.

'How did you...?' Danika said, her voice clipped.

'Interesting,' Bridger said as he inspected the small bag of marijuana in his hand. 'Elijah's a good kid, but he shouldn't be giving out quantities like this. From what I hear, he's spicing this shit up with loads of other stuff as well. Probably helps the value of it go down, am I right?'

Danika rubbed her forearms. 'What are you talking about?'

'Is it just the weed you bought today or is there a bit of MDMA in there too? Or is that only for Wednesdays?'

Danika's face turned pale and she looked faint.

'Bit of a risky thing to be doing, what with these random drug checks in place,' he jabbed.

'Elliot, please. You can't tell any—'

'I won't. You know why?'

Danika shook her head.

'Because I've got you in my pocket. And when I've got you in my pocket, it's very difficult for you to get out again. Understand?'

Danika dipped her head. Tormenting her, teasing her, making her regret the last two months of drug abuse gave him some sort of bizarre kick. He could only imagine how

much sweeter it would have felt if he were a straight copper, getting rid of the dirty brass from the force and burning it down to the ground.

'I need you to do something for me. Reckon you can handle it?'

'It depends... It... It depends what it is.'

Bridger held a finger in the air, silencing Danika immediately. 'Maybe you didn't understand properly. When you're in my pocket, you will do *anything* I tell you to. It was a rhetorical question. And now that I know how much you rely on these little goodies, I know it's going to be very easy for you to follow orders. Think of your children, your husband.'

'Please,' Danika said, 'I said that night was a mistake.'

Shaking his head, Bridger replied, 'I'm not talking about that night. I'm talking about something else.'

'What?'

Bridger dropped the handbag to the floor and pocketed the weed. 'I need you to help me. I need you to get Michael and Danny Cipriano out of remand and into the witness protection scheme.'