Title: Crash and Burn
Author: tj_teejay (AO3 – Tumblr – Instagram – Reddit – E-Mail)
Genre: Gen (with perhaps slight het undertones)
Characters/Pairings: Jordan, TC
Rating: PG-13
Warning: Spoilers for the season 1 finale (episode 1x08)
Summary: After the events of the last few hours and TC's reluctant confession, there is no way Jordan will let TC just go home on his own. Episode tag to 1x08.
Author's Note: This demanded to be written, so who was I to resist? Apologies, but this hasn't been beta'ed—mainly for the fact that I'm pretty sure none of my usual beta readers knows the show. Please do not share or upload this fic anywhere without the author's permission.

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The drive was quiet, but there was little left to be said. Well, if Jordan was quite honest, there were a great many things left to be said, but they didn't fit into this moment. She knew that, and TC knew it too.

She stole the occasional glance at him—he stared quietly out the passenger side window, letting the world that was illuminated by the bright morning sun pass him by.

As she pulled into her driveway and switched off the engine, his head finally perked up. He looked at her, and she knew his question without him asking it aloud.

She shifted in her seat to face him. "There is no way in hell I'm going to let you stay on your own today."

He shook his head ever so slightly. "Jordan," he just said. "You should take me home."

"I'm not even sure I would call that place a home."

"What—it's a trailer."

"Yeah," she said, not able to hide the sarcasm from her voice, "And I can just imagine the state it's in right now. The perfect place to spend your time after a night like this. Just you and your buddy Jack Daniels, right?" She opened the driver's side door. "No discussion. You're staying here."

Somehow she hadn't expected him to relent so easily, but he wordlessly followed her into her home.

"What about Scott?" he asked as she put away her keys and her purse.

Her lips tightened into a straight line. She knew sooner or later she needed to sort out how she really felt about Scott. She knew full well that having TC here was dangerous, especially in the state he was in. She also knew that Scott didn't matter—not right now.

"He stayed at the hospital. He's probably not going to be here for a while."

He twisted around to gesture towards the door. "Look, I… I think this is a bad idea."

"T. Please. I don't want you to be alone today, okay?"

He turned back to face her and met her gaze. Whatever he found there seemed to melt away his resistance. He nodded ever so slightly. "Okay."

“Okay,” she repeated a bit more cheerfully, trying to muster all the positive energy she needed. “You should try to catch some sleep. I’ll set you up in the guest room.”

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She wasn’t sure what had woken her, and it took her a few seconds to find her bearings. She listened intently, surmising that the noises were coming from the guest room.

A quick glance at her clock told her she’d barely slept three hours. Too little for her brain to function properly. Yet, she swung her legs over the edge of the bed and on bare feet padded to his room, pushing the door ajar enough to peek in.

He stood by the window, staring out at the street.

She quietly said his name, and he turned his head to acknowledge her.

“I woke you,” he said.

She nodded, entering the room, resisting the urge to walk up to him to envelop him in her arms. “Another one of those dreams?”

He closed his eyes, drawing in a long breath that he let out slowly. “Yeah,” was all he answered.

She felt a knot tightening in her stomach, and instantly knew that sleep was off the table—at least for now. She sat down on the edge of the bed among the rumpled sheets.

Silence hung in the room for a long moment. This was always going to be the elephant in the room, the elephant that had eventually driven them apart. The elephant he wasn’t willing to cage and tame.

“So what now?” she asked in a low voice.

He shrugged. “I don’t know.”

She had surmised as much. Vulnerability wasn’t something he was accustomed to. She was walking a fine line, and wasn’t quite sure how to not take the misstep that would make the shutters come down.

“I know you don’t wanna hear this—“

He abruptly turned around and interrupted her. “But you’re gonna tell me that I should see a shrink and talk about my PTSD. Yeah. I’ve heard that one before. More times than I can count.”

She opened her mouth for a quick, heated retort, but then thought the better of it. “I know,” she offered quietly. “But last night was… terrifying. More than terrifying. Don’t you think it’s time to get help? More than I can give you?”

“I’m fine, Jordan. I don’t need a shrink.”

She’d heard that one before. More times than *she* could count. But she was over the anger. Especially since she knew it wasn’t going to accomplish anything.

She felt a helplessness washing over her, feeling the two of them being sucked into the same vortex she knew so well. He’d insist that he didn’t need help, and over time he’d get more

unpredictable, more erratic, more volatile. And then disaster would strike and she'd have to pull him out of his own mess all over again. It was their vicious cycle, the one she'd sworn off so many times.

Involuntarily, images pushed themselves in front of her mind's eye. Security dragging a screaming TC away. An utterly defeated TC in handcuffs in the crew room. A shattered TC leaning into her lap.

'I'll take care of you,' she had mumbled into his hair. She suddenly found that she didn't know how, and it destroyed something inside of her.

She could feel her own eyes filling with tears, her brow furrowing with the emotions that washed over her. She quickly wiped the tears away, but not quickly enough for him not to notice.

"You're crying." He sounded confused. "Why are you crying?"

"Because it's killing me that you keep doing this to yourself, and there isn't a damn thing I can do about it."

The bed dipped slightly as he sat down next to her. They both stayed quiet until he broke the silence.

"I don't want to."

"Don't want to what?"

"I don't want to talk about it. Especially not to some stranger who is going to meticulously note down every word I say, only to dissect it afterwards letter by letter."

"Some would say that's the whole point—that it's someone you don't know. Kinda like wiping the slate clean."

"So I tell all those sordid war stories to some head shrink, what's that supposed to accomplish, other than Ragosa finding yet another reason to fire me?"

"T, you need to stop trying to find the rational component in all of this. There is nothing rational about PTSD, or about survivor's guilt, or the million other terrible things that happened to you. It's about figuring out how you can arrange yourself around them to live a life without constant pain, constant anger. A psychiatrist is there to help you with that."

"Come on, you know it's not as easy as that."

"No one ever said it was going to be easy," she said, studying his profile, trying to gauge his state of mind. "I think what you really need to do is ask yourself the question whether you want your life to go on like this. And if not, if you're willing to make those changes.

"Because, you know, when it comes down to it, you could probably go on like this forever. Granted, it'll get you fired eventually. And then you'll find the next place to crash and burn. And the next, and the next. And that—" she tried to stifle the sob that was working up her throat, "is the part that makes me want to wish I didn't have to watch you do it."

"Hey," he said softly, turning to face her, his hands cupping both sides of her face.

Their eyes met, and something dangerous crackled in the air. He drew his face close to hers, his lips brushing hers, his stubble rubbing along her lower lip ever so slightly. It was pure impulse that had her meet him halfway, but it took a mere second for her brain to kick in.

She pulled back, pushing him away with one hand. “No, T. We both know where this would be going, and that’s the last thing any of us needs right now.”

His posture as he withdrew reminded her of a wounded animal, and he stared down at his hands that were now folded atop his thighs. He let out a hollow chuckle. “Look at me. You’re one of the last true friends I have, and now I’m messing that up too.”

“No,” she responded quickly, “you’re not messing anything up. You’re only human. I think that’s what I’ve been trying to tell you all along. You just need to see it too.”

His right hand came up to his mouth and he started rubbing his fingers along his upper lip.

“Look,” she addressed him. “We don’t have to make any decisions today. Think you can get some more sleep?”

He let out a sarcastic chuckle. “Yeah, sure. I’ll just lie down and sleep like a baby. No problem.”

Quite frankly, she’d already given up on the idea of going back to bed. She gave him a well-meant thump on the upper arm. “How does breakfast at Guenther’s sound? My treat.”

“More babysitting, huh?”

“Come on, even you can’t resist a free meal.”

“If you insist.”

She smiled at him. “I do.”

She got up from the bed and walked towards the door when his voice stopped her. “Jordan?”

His warm, brown eyes met hers when she turned around to face him.. “Thank you.”

She nodded. “Any time.”

And even though she knew she might regret it eventually, she more than meant it.

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THE END.