Cuddle

By C. Jade Wyton

Tiffany Goldman has had a very stressful day; after somehow accidentally finding herself and her sons at an illegal auction of black-market goods, she is unable to sleep…. And, sadly, it seems her son is feeling much the same. But at least they can comfort each other.

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Tiffany couldn't sleep.

Today had been a lot.

She had thought Monday had been difficult— Dealing with that freaking *leprechaun* that broke into the hotel had been hell….

But today had been *terrifying*.

It was just meant to be a trip downtown with her boys, but somehow they had found themselves accidentally boarding an unlisted train to… how many *hundreds* of miles underground had that Creedence man said they were…?

Tiffany had been petrified. If she hadn't been met by those Maria and Johanna girls, she might have had a full-blown panic attack…. But their calmness helped her ground herself.

She was finally starting to relax, before….

She shuddered at the thought of the auction.

Animals and magical creatures had been sold off and traded; including a selkie woman that Tiffany had met before. A friend of Maria's.

Luckily they had somehow managed to get her back. Tiffany wasn't sure how— She'd rushed her boys back to the train and just prayed nothing else happened before they got home. Which, Tiffany was glad she had done as apparently a fight or something had broken out and one of the people at the auction had been beaten half to death (a horrible sight to see, when he got back on the train). She was very glad her boys hadn't been exposed to that. The aftermath of it had shaken them enough. She couldn't imagine if they had seen it happening….

It was lucky that Logan was easy to distract… but Trent had been uncharacteristically quiet on the way home. And it was making Tiffany really very worried about him.

Trent was *never* quiet. That was what made him so charming…. It was worrying, how distracted he had seemed for the rest of the day—

A knock rapped on Tiffany's door, and she pushed herself up as Trent's voice called out to her.

Speak of the devil.

'Come in, hon!'

The door *clicked* open and Trent shuffled inside, quietly climbing into bed with his mother and shuffling under her arm to cuddle against her.

'Hey, hon, what's up?' Tiffany asked, returning her son's embrace. 'You doing alright?'
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‘Yeah,’ Trent replied. ‘Are you okay?’

‘Yeah, I’m okay,’ Tiffany reassured.

‘You were really scared, today,’ said Trent. ‘I’ve never seen you scared before. Not like that.’

‘Mm,’ Tiffany let out a sigh.

‘You said we weren’t meant to be there? Is that why you were so scared?’

‘Yeah.’

‘And then they were selling that woman,’ Trent said, frowning deeply. ‘That’s bad. That’s like… really bad.’

‘Yeah,’ Tiffany repeated. ‘Yeah it— It’s bad. And that’s why you can’t tell anyone that we were there, okay? Because if they know we told, they might get angry at us, and look for us… you understand?’

‘So we can’t even tell the police?’ Trent’s frown grew deeper. ‘I thought we were meant to call the police about this stuff.’

‘Maria works with the police,’ Tiffany comforted. ‘I’m sure she’s going to tell them.’

‘I dunno, Mum,’ Trent scrunched up his nose. ‘She bought that dog. Is she gonna tell the police, when she was buying stuff from there?’

‘Well… she’d know better then us I suppose,’ Tiffany gave a half-hearted shrug. ‘I trust her to tell the people who need to know.’

‘Mm… okay,’ Trent shuffled tighter against his mother. ‘So… I don’t tell anyone that we went there, and… you said we can do something naughty in trade for not telling?’

‘Yeah,’ Tiffany gave a nervous chuckle. ‘Am I going to regret making that deal?’

‘Maybe,’ Trent said simply. Then rolled onto his back and scratched his chin as if in deep thought. ‘So we can do something naughty, and not get in trouble….’

‘Yeah. That was the deal.’

‘Together, or each?’

‘Hm… I hate to say it but… I think *each* is the fairest,’ Tiffany said cautiously, before she sat up and reached for her bedside table. She picked up a notebook and pen, which she scribbled in for a moment before tearing out the page of the book and ripping it in half. ‘Here. One for you, and one for Logan. This way you can each choose what you don’t want to get in trouble for.’

She handed the papers to her son, who examined then closely.

‘*Get out of trouble card,*’ he said, slowly. ‘*Usable once*…. Hahah! Nice.’

‘Give the other to Logan when he’s up, okay?’

‘Okay!’ Trent beamed, folding the pieces over and putting them down on his mother’s bedside table so he could snuggle back into her. ‘Do you think there’s a way we could earn *more* of these, or…?’

‘Don’t push your luck, hon.’

—END—

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