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ARON BEAUREGARD

YELLOW



**THEY TOOK HIS WIFE, THEY TOOK HIS BUSINESS,
BUT THEY DIDN'T REALIZE... THEY ALSO TOOK HIS
FEAR!**

YELLOW
ARON BEAUREGARD
MAGGOT PRESS



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WARNING

This book contains scenes and subject matter that are disgusting and disturbing,
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*For the late great slayer of muggers, killer of rapists, and exterminator
of savage street scum, the original vigilante and dealer of vengeance,
Charles Bronson.*

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BRONSON: "Do you believe in Jesus?"

PUNK: "Yes I do..."

BRONSON: "Well, you're gonna meet him."

(fires numerous shots)

- DEATHWISH 2

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RELENTLESS FEAR



“Give me two packs of shorts,” Angel Rodriguez demanded as he approached the counter while pulling up his sagging jeans.

Oliver Fitch turned to the wall of cancer sticks behind him with sweat saturating his balding skull. His memory was failing him; it was usually photographic, but his brain always went as blank as a doe in high beams when he was flustered. How he wished his mind would just cooperate... if never again, just this once. If only he could remember, then he wouldn't have to ask. He turned his head away from the endless stacks of smokes, dejectedly accepting defeat, and inquired, “I'm sorry, sir, two packs of what brand?”

“What, you don't remember me, son?! I thought I was one of your best customers. Shit, now I feel disrespected. What am I gonna have to do to make it stick in that sloppy ass head of yours? What's it take to make a fuckin' impression around here?”

Angel had an edge to him, one that was so sharp and explosive that it pressed into those in his circumference until it

drew blood. He reached into his bubble jacket deliberately as a smile crept across the discolored flesh on his scarred face. The rugged street soldier's violent past was a visible part of him—the whitened patches and lines of mayhem stood as a warning to all. A warning that he wore like a badge of honor and used to intimidate his prey.

His lone golden tooth glimmered at the front of his mouth, highlighted by the florescent lighting. The sunlight that would have crept in through the cracked blinds of the Stop N' Go convenience store had all but been swallowed up by the ever-present overbearing rainfall that had been soaking the city for weeks now.

“N-Nothing, if you can just tell me once more, I'll remember next time, I swear it. I don't want any trouble, please...”

Angel's eyes reflected a nefarious twinkle toward Oliver that left thoughts of what his funeral might look like floating around in his skull. This wasn't the first time. If his bottomless gaze wasn't enough to trigger his recall, the tattoo that was draped across the thug's thick throat which read “BONA FIDE KILLAH” certainly stood out.

The grin melted off his face as he extracted a black curved blade from his jacket. It resembled a panther's claw. He set his hand upon the counter, gripping it in an unstable manner to the point of white-knuckle.

“Problem is, I'm getting tired of repeating myself every time I come inside this bitch. Maybe if I just carve it into ya fuckin' gringo head, that'll make me a higher priority, whatchu think? Or betta yet, how bout I slash it into the missus over there?” He looked over at Oliver's wife, Lydia, who stood a few feet away observing the dealings unfold while oozing dread.

The terror on her face was causing a warm glossy water to spill out quietly. Her shoulders shook uncontrollably but there was something else mixed in with all the emotion. A burning sensation that was unmistakably inferior and pathetic—shame.

Her shame and embarrassment on behalf of her feeble, sackless husband felt like the most wretched emotion. Her mind rambled on internally about how it would have been nice to have a man that stood up for his woman. She was being threatened so inhumanely, but deep inside, she knew that in being with Oliver, basic safety would never be a security she would enjoy.

Angel took a step toward Lydia, “Ya probably would see it better on her anyway... shit, when I’m finished with this cunt, it might even seem like a lil’ upgrade.”

Lydia looked like she was being readied for the firing squad. She couldn’t squish her spinal column up against the wall any tighter. She was cornered and as frozen as fish sticks.

“Wait, please! I’m sorry, just don’t hurt us. It’s Newport, isn’t it?” he guessed, praying he was right. “Newport shorts, right?!” Oliver dropped two crush-proof boxes onto the clear countertop advertising five-dollar scratch tickets beneath. Angel turned back to face Oliver and raised his hand, pointing the blade just a short measure from his eyeball.

“Look at that, all of a sudden, your memory is back. That’s a good start... real good. But don’t relax just yet, fat fuck, I’m gonna be back soon to make sure you didn’t forget about me. Real soon, white boy. I’ll be seein’ you.”

Angel collapsed the pointy steel back into the dragon handle and snatched the smokes off the counter. Oliver exhaled as his straining heart tried to slow itself. He was soaked in his own fluid, dripping from head to toe. His tail shook between his legs as his face flushed with humiliation. He felt sick, like he might lose his lunch on the spot.

He gained further relief in hearing the jingle of the door bells; it was the sound he most looked forward to. He’d named their store Stop N’ Go, but truth be told, the stopping part he dreaded. The thought of who the next grime-stained, gutter-dwelling patron to roll up might be haunted him endlessly. He found himself praying in his head each time he looked up at the door. Based on the vile clientele he and Lydia were forced

to interact with on the daily, it wasn't hard to understand why he preferred the latter part of the store title.

He turned to his wife with his palm still clasped over his sternum like he was mid-heart-attack. Disappointment and regret seemed like they'd become the permanent base for Lydia's expression. Oliver had noticed the trend; it was too obvious not to. The shitty environment they'd unknowingly imprisoned themselves in fueled their never-ending cycle of futility, humiliation, and tension. He knew it all too well and he certainly knew what came next.

"It's a wonder you can even fuckin' walk. You're spineless! Spineless like a slug, Ollie. No, even a slug would probably have the guts to defend its family. It'd be a discredit to them to call you that. You're more like a worm on a hook; bleeding and trapped. I don't know how we've even survived this long, probably because you've been giving the goddamn store away to those savage bastards."

"I'm sorry, Lydia, I tried to—"

"When are you gonna grow a pair, Ollie?! When one of those sick degenerates cuts me into pieces?! Still, you'd probably stand there and do nothing. You're no man."

"Lydia, please—"

"Since your brilliant idea to buy this shithole and gamble our future, I've realized something. There hasn't been one day, ONE FUCKING DAY, that I've felt safe."

"The area wasn't like this when we bought the place, everything's changed. You saw it too. You just have to believe that things'll change again. Lydia, trust me, things'll change again..." It didn't take an astrologer to read the signs. The words left his mouth flat, there was no belief behind them and there was no hope in his tone.

The salty reservoirs of regret began to flow heavier. "I did it to myself, I'm the one that married you," she cried, beginning to break down. "You ruined my life!" she screamed before running off toward the loading area.

She'd cursed him countless times. As horrible as the words were, he almost didn't feel them anymore. He was becoming desensitized to her blunt critiques. The once stinging slander had lost its punch just as his once optimistic phrases of reassurance had become so worn down that they were see-through.

The slow-burning dreamy detachment from reality protected him from the pain at least. The transparency of their dilemma only served to further escalate a burgeoning hidden detestation that Oliver had for his wife. One that he swallowed daily to hold the cracked pieces together. The malignant storefront and each other were all they had, and so they remained. In his eyes, that was maybe the most pathetic part.

THEM BOYZ



The entrance chimes jingled again and Oliver’s eyes shot up from the newspaper. Officer Logan Thomas strolled across the checkered floor of the Stop N’ Go, tipping his police cap in Oliver’s direction. He returned the friendly nod apprehensively and then sent his eyes back to the trashy headlines that fit in so well with the big city he’d grown to despise.

Officer Thomas slowed to a halt in front of the donut case and pulled out his favorite—a powdered jelly. Next, he walked over to the coffee burner and poured himself a hot cup, then flooded it with sugar and cream. He capped it off and bit into the donut carelessly, allowing the red gel to secrete out the side and splat onto the floor below him.

The ring of entry resounded again, and this time, both Officer Thomas and Oliver looked over. It was Ramon Cruz, one of the few folks in the area that Oliver actually looked forward to seeing. A rare grin crinkled his lips, it was almost as if he smiled so intermittently that he was forgetting how to.

“Ramon, how are things? It’s good to see you again, my friend.”

“It goes and it doesn’t stop,” Ramon replied.

He maneuvered his chubby, tanned frame around the magazine rack and picked up a basket. “The family is loco,” he said, twisting his finger in circles beside his left temple. He perused the store, selecting a variety of food, drinks, and snacks. The prices were cheaper at the grocery store but he wanted to do what he could to help out his friend. He’d seen the neighborhood bullies take advantage of Oliver, so his empathy for the poor man’s circumstance was sincere.

“Well, I’m sure you’ve got it under control,” Oliver laughed.

“Yeah, the ninos aren’t ninos anymore. Only a few more years until freedom. After that, me and Felicia, we’re out. Then it’s just beaches, bachata, and Bacardi, you know what I’m saying?”

“Sounds like a plan. Hopefully, this damn rain lets up by then.” Oliver was genuinely happy for him, he didn’t have a child or a life full of positives so, at times, he found himself living vicariously through Ramon, that was the best he could get.

“But what about you?”

“Eh, I can’t say I see any beaches in my near future.”

Ramon was paying attention to Oliver but also watching Officer Thomas. He’d just finished eating his donut and, with his coffee in one hand, he used the other to crack open a pornographic magazine he’d just plucked off the shelf. He looked at the overinflated titties joyfully and headed for the door.

“AY!” Ramon yelled at Officer Thomas.

The alerted officer turned around and let his gaze drift off the stag-mag for a moment and fixed it on Oliver, then finally back over to Ramon.

“It’s because of guys like this you’re not seeing no beaches, this asshole is pinching your profits. He’s pissing on your

beaches.”

“The fuck you say to me, spic?” Officer Thomas couldn’t believe he had the nuts to call him out.

“You’re stealing from my friend, I see you in here all the time. All you do is take, take, take. You never pay, you’re supposed to be the police, but you never help us.”

Office Thomas undid the strap on his waist-side holster and let his palm rest on the gun handle. “You’re gonna be the one who has to pay if you don’t shut your cocksucker, Pedro, I can promise you that.”

Through the window of the Stop N’ Go, a small cluster of gang bangers had formed on the corner. Ramon raised his free hand and pointed to the window, “You’re no better than them! You’re just another fuckin’ criminal, and someday, everybody’s gonna know exactly who you really are, who all the police around here really are.”

A disgusting shit-eating grin formed on Officer Thomas’s face as Ramon’s words dawned on him. He turned a blind eye to crime as long as he got a fair slice. He robbed his freebies from weaklings like Oliver and had no problem watching the fiends feast to extinction. Each ridged, dope-laced body they found convulsing on the concrete only led to more Benjamins in his billfold.

“And what the fuck are you gonna do about it?”

It was a great question, clearly directed like an open challenge to the pair of them. Oliver hoped that Ramon would just let it go, he’d seen Officer Thomas’s dark side before. It was a dangerous place that some hadn’t moved on from. He recalled the evening when a mentally ill junkie outside the store got into an argument with him. The beef was really just a minor disagreement in the grand scheme of things.

It was obvious the junk head, like many with the sickness, had lost his awareness. He was staggering about, contradicting himself... didn’t even know what he was disagreeing over. He never would have the chance to find out either because Oliver

watched Officer Thomas put seven slugs in his chest without a second thought. Then he dropped a knife in the bum's empty palm and got a pat on the back from the captain. To the detached public, they were stopping violent criminals, but in reality, they were just creating them.

Oliver knew that, to Thomas, human life was expendable. He'd let off more rounds than Rambo and when he shot, he didn't miss. But they lived in the kind of cesspool that could care less about bodies or how high they were piled. So long as they weren't wearing blue uniforms, suits and ties, or connected to prominent criminals.

Rumor had it that the reason he was so quick with the trigger was because he had a deal with some of the funeral homes. If he sent one their way, they sent something back his way. As repulsive as the thought of such an arrangement was to Oliver, he would have bet his left nut that it was more than just a conspiracy theory.

Being fully aware that if you were a minor nuisance while in the presence of Officer Thomas, you could quickly be a candidate for a closed casket made him freeze up for the second time that day. *First, that asshole, Angel, now this prick,* Oliver thought.

As he watched Officer Thomas ominously caress the handle of his pistol and gawk at them, he knew firsthand there was reason for terror. The psychopath had no qualms about putting anyone out, it was all there right in his pupils.

Officer Thomas fastened the safety back on his holster and turned back around. "That's what I thought," he said, pushing the door open to venture back out into the rainfall.

Oliver was able to breathe again; his crushing anxiety of a violent demise had finally dissipated. It had been like that since he could remember, he cowered in the face of even the most minor confrontation. He didn't argue back or defend himself, he just tried to defuse as best he could. And if that didn't work, he just let whatever was going to happen, happen. Confidence was simply a quality that he was born deprived of.

Considering how things had shaken out and the breed of turmoil he'd found himself facing, it was the cruelest irony.

If only the city hadn't gone to hell... or if it had at least gone to hell a little sooner. Sure, it was busy when they'd decided to invest, but it wasn't corrupt. The streets weren't being suffocated by countless parasitic people, leeching off him, sucking the goddamn life from his view and the sanity from his mind. If only he'd known, he'd never have bought the fucking store in the first place. He didn't imagine that he'd be signing up for skirmishes every day, his timid traits weren't designed to keep him treading water in such an environment. It was a miracle he'd survived as long as he had.

For a moment, he fantasized about what it might have been like to not be financially married to the now deeply depressing building. Both he and Lydia distancing themselves from the sick joke that they were living. Their relationship smoothing out, the loathing and turbulence fading away. His thought was interrupted as Ramon set his basket on the counter. Reality came back, and the ire lingered within him.

"Man, what a piece of shit, can you believe that? Serve and protect my ass, it's more like steal and neglect."

"Your English gets better by the day."

"Only because I practice with you, amigo." They shared a laugh as Oliver started to count up and bag his items.

"Someday, he's gonna get his. People gonna see who he really is. I'm keeping my eye open, I'm watching, and when he fucks up, I'll have proof."

"Just try to stay out of his way, Ramon, the guy's a psycho, pulling his gun at the drop of a hat like that. Death just comes to those around him. The less interaction you have with him, the better. It's not worth it..."

"It is to me. I'm not scared of him. The good people and kids around here shouldn't have to be afraid either."

"Okay, that'll be \$32.75 today," Oliver said, trying to erase the thought of confronting Officer Thomas from his ballsy

friend's mind. Ramon set down two twenty-dollar bills and pushed them towards Oliver who began to count out the change when he stopped him.

“It's okay, my friend, it's for you.”

“But your change...” Oliver was a bit confused and didn't understand what he meant exactly.

“No, I want you to have it, it's all for you, okay?”

A sadness came over Oliver, he didn't want to take the money but he needed it desperately. For years, he'd been living to make every penny count, desperately trying to make up for what the leeches had been draining from him. The dirty cops and muggers had syphoned enough to push him to the verge of bankruptcy. Here he was, on the cusp of turning forty-six, and he didn't have a pot to piss in—just a piece of property that he detested.

There'd been some real questions about the future of not only the store but his home since they were one in the same. The biggest selling point of the property was the fact that there was an apartment above the storefront on the second floor. There was virtually no commute and they were accounting for both their living quarters and the business rental space in a single payment.

It seemed like a no-brainer at the time, but now, if he lost the business, they would also be homeless. Not that there was much of a barrier now, but if they didn't continue to come up with the cash, there would be zero barriers between them and the scum that lined the streets.

While indignity pounded Oliver like a lead pipe over the head, he thanked his friend for the kind gesture. They were few and far between for him these days. He bagged up Ramon's items and shook his hand while wishing him a safe evening.

After Ramon left, Oliver shut all the lights off and closed the graffiti-riddled steel roll-down shell that protected the building's exterior. He locked all the doors to the Stop N' Go

and checked the backroom for Lydia, but she wasn't there. She must have already gone upstairs to sulk in her numerous disappointments. Oliver took a deep breath and headed up to join her.

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REMEMBER ME?



Damien Sanchez sat on a wine-shaded sofa cleaning the still-hot blood from his spiked brass knuckles. He picked off the chunks of throbbing purple meat that clung to them. His hands didn't shake. Tattoos littered his entire body; they blended into his espresso skin from his nose to his toes, but in the right lighting, one could plainly see where his fascinations laid.

His body was a tribute to all that was wicked. His fixation with Satan was made clear by the detailed three-dimensional horns that had been manually implanted underneath his skin. They extended the elasticized flesh outward, and upon head-butt, projected out realistically enough to pierce a foe. The dripping upside-down crucifix was not actually a tattoo per se. He'd created it by pressing a molten red-hot branding iron into his own forehead. The skin appeared, to anyone with the balls to look his way, like it was creepily oozing downward because he'd liquefied the surrounding tissue for effect. The painful-looking runny pigment had dried mid-drip.

A swarming myriad of his prior slayings and immoral deeds were illustrated everywhere in graphic, macabre detail. In between the flood of perversity were flurries of tally marks that served as a reminder of the hundreds of souls he'd sent to the master. He was running out of mortal real estate but not bloodlust. His wrath would stretch far beyond his human canvas once necessary.

He glanced down at the array of party favors that lined the glass hexagon table in front of him. He paused his activity momentarily and did a bump the size of a garden snake like it was old hat. His flame-colored contacts meshed in with his bloodshot eyes as he transferred his glossy gawk to the pair of tricks making out on the love seat. The girls didn't hold his attention for long, he was soon again transfixed on the work he'd just wrapped up.

The snitch he'd just put to bed that was laid out along the perimeter of the room still leaking. Gina Spain had found her final pose as she lay crumpled awkwardly in a corner. A mashed frown and pulverized cheeks left her definitively harboring an adrenaline-satiated, panic-garnished expression.

He'd pounded on her chest with such ferocity that her ribcage was now like an old road on a rainy night—an uneven mess riddled with wet bumps and divots. He hadn't just worked on her with his knuckles, her left arm was laying in front of the snowy big screen TV, its color distorted by the flicker of the picture. A lengthy machete remained wedged halfway into her cerebellum. Its blood-smear handle pointing up toward the heavens as if to project a mocking message to the Holy Father sitting above.

“Bring Angel in here now, then clean up this mess. One of you will take her remains to the altar and the other will mark me,” Damien gave his command to the girls without severing his stare.

Both of the girls quickly put a halt to the make-out session and did as they were told.

Damien looked back to the destroyed mess he'd left and communicated with Gina as if she could still comprehend him, "You should never speak about me, child, you had so much promise. The lawman has no more power than you. The lawman is my dog and his followers are my minions. I have the candy that they all crave. I own the paper that they all worship blindly. There is no savior, there is only sanctuary in our solidarity. We are one now and you shall fuel the future, we will all be one in time."

If the streets didn't know that talking to the cops (even if you were fucking them) got circumvented right back to him, they soon would. Gina was a girl that was always everywhere, Damien classified her as 'the kind of bitch that never shut the fuck up.' She was quiet now. It was dirt nap time and it would only be a matter of hours until their dark collective underbelly would pick up on her disappearance. It didn't matter that it was a woman, Damien was an equal opportunist. The already raunchy gutter generals would soon understand that the first time you spoke ill of the name Damien Sanchez, could very well be your last.

One of the girls returned with a number of garbage bags and began to collect whatever pieces of Gina she could. The second arrived soon after, followed by Angel. She set an ink thimble on the vanity table and dipped the buzzing tattoo needle inside.

As she added a new hash mark to the side of Damien's abdomen, he stared at the group of hairy, naked men on the television beheading a goat by a glowing campfire. Damien slowly shut his eyes. He whispered to himself, chanting a "prayer" that was identical to the one that pushed its way out from the Samsung. Angel stood awaiting direction, only once Damien concluded his ritualistic hymn did he speak while keeping his eyes closed.

"Today, Levi's getting out. Get him some pussy. Make sure he has an unforgettable first day out. We have many important deeds to tend to soon, he will require a woman's rejuvenation."

“You got it, boss.”

Angel pulled the Oldsmobile up just a few yards away from the spiky penitentiary gates. The jagged unforgiving barbwire spirals that plagued the fence top brought back a rush of memories—some good, mostly bad, with tons of ugly.

When he'd first gone inside, he was barely a man. While, genetically, his body had grown and both his birth certificate and the justice system considered him an adult, his mind had regressed like a turtle tucking back into its shell. He was stuck in the same trap that the rest of the smog-clouded city dwellers found themselves in. He'd chosen to focus on what was in front of him; the barbarity he already knew like the warning label on his Newport box. He chose criminal comfort over the wonderful clean things he'd seen people achieve on the television. Instead of educating himself, he accepted the harsh laws of the concrete jungle.

It wasn't to say that opportunity was knocking at every door in the projects (mostly, it was just five-o kicking them in), Angel was just another stick-up-kid. He remained a small timer until Damien Sanchez had given him the opportunity that (in his own mind) the orderly world and its obedient inhabitants never would have.

He'd grown tired of breaking up half ounces, running around the boulevard cutting up disease-riddled fiends while chasing down payments. He was tired of playing checkers and being restricted to a limited move set. Damien was playing chess, and even though he would only be a pawn genuflecting to the laws he saw fit, forget about a different league, he was playing a different game now.

No more sifting for breadcrumbs, the dime bag days were done. He was working with pounds of raw material now. Serious bulk transactions that put thick stacks of paper in his pockets and the rush in his veins. He had made it. With that, his compliance and loyalty was to the death, and such was the

case for Levi Ballard, the man who was departing the slowly closing length of prickly and pointed fencing before him.

The black clouds and depressing storm snuffed out the yellow sagging sun leaving Levi's chiseled physique silhouetted from behind. He looked a lot bigger than before. He was never one to fuck with, but now he had somehow achieved a new threshold of intimidation.

Angel owed a lot to Levi. While he was a menace before he got locked up, gen pop was a different level of degeneracy. He was tender meat for the taking to the deranged maniacs and hardened predators that looked at death as an escape from decades in the cage. He would've surely been someone's punk for life or ended up deceased and desecrated had Levi not decided to take him under his protective wing.

Angel took a short moment to recall their initial interaction. When Levi first crossed paths with him, a few of the homies had just driven a shiv into his love handle after mealtime in the chow hall. He was bent over a metal table in the back of the kitchen with his sweat pants around his ankles and bad intentions surrounding him.

A pair of HIV positive lifers pinned his arms against the cold table while a third pulled the homemade toothbrush shank out of his leaking side. The salivating sodomizer had just put the now ruby refined plastic against Angel's Adam's apple and dropped his own drawers when Levi suddenly unloaded on them.

Even at the young age of eighteen, Angel had seen a lot of brawls in his time, but never an annihilation like what he witnessed that day in the clink. The man fought like he was possessed... like he couldn't be beaten.

Levi disarmed their leader first and went on to shatter bones, loosen teeth, and cause severe head trauma. He spared their lives; leaving the scars as a lasting message was more beneficial than sending them off.

Good deeds had never been a priority in Levi's mind, in fact, most of the time, he figured the inmates were getting the hellish comeuppance they'd earned. He enjoyed observing their stress and agony, but when he saw Angel, for a split-second, something else came over him. Something he hadn't felt in a long time.

He'd decided to act on it. He didn't know why, it just happened. Maybe it was the look in his eyes that he recognized from the way things were when he first came in. Maybe, in some ways, he saw a little piece of himself in the kid and decided not to let him get ruined off the rip.

Either way, it didn't matter. Angel was spared and protected. Instead of getting his shit pushed in and taking orders, he was doing the pushing and giving them. Over time, Levi had seen salvaging Angel during his short stint was the right decision. His thuggish tendencies, trigger temper, and penchant for violence were all coveted assets within Damien's faction.

Levi recognized the potential and groomed him for a new life outside of bars. A life that would be more structured, lucrative, and opportunistic. He'd created another pillar in Damien's pyramid of murderers, one that could serve as a replacement during his absence.

Now things had come full circle. There he was, almost nine years later, getting picked up by a man who was the product of his own crooked counsel and gangster guidance. Levi pulled the candy apple door of the Cutlass open and slumped down onto the luxury cushion. Angel didn't really know what to expect, he looked to Levi to initiate conversation.

"Remember me?" Levi asked Angel while an unsettling gravity pulled down on him. He didn't know why, as Levi had never mistreated him—he'd looked after him like a son—but for some reason, he still scared the hell out of him. The subtle confederate tinge in his tone brought him back to the same stinging panic he was beset by when he'd first encountered the man.

He cleared the lump from his throat and replied, “How could I forget? You’re the only reason I’m still alive.”

Levi didn’t acknowledge his thanks; he wasn’t comfortable with the warm and fuzzy feelings. But in his mind, he felt content that Angel recalled what he’d done for him after such an enormous stretch.

“I never really got to show my appreciation for everything you did for me... saving my ass, getting me in with Damien ___”

“I don’t do the syrupy shit, ain’t nothing sweet about what I done for you, kid. You saved yourself in there, you already had the potential, I just seen it in you. If you didn’t already have it, I woulda just let them fuckin’ animals tear you apart. But for what it’s worth, I heard you’ve been doing things. I heard you’ve been running a burrow yourself and Damien is happy as a pig in shit.”

“I did like you told me.”

“You just keep doing that and you’ll be alright. What did Damien tell you about tonight?”

“He told me to get you some pussy.” He watched Levi crack a smile, the first hint of emotion from either of them. “But I know you don’t like to *get* it, you like to take it. So, I got the perfect idea.”

Angel joined him, brandishing his expensive, flashy dental work as he opened the glove box. Inside, there were two all-black ski masks, a Berretta, and a pint of E&J brandy. “Happy first day out,” Angel said as he put the car in drive while Levi took hold of the bottle and cracked the seal.

MASK UP



By the time they got back, the Erk & Jerk had dried up and nightfall was upon them. An unnerving darkness stirred about the burrow, serving as a dangerous camouflage. Giant rats tore through the piles of garbage near the dumpster behind the Stop N' Go as Angel and Levi began to mask up. The thick cotton facial covering couldn't stop the smell of poverty and neglect that stewed in the alley from creeping up their nostrils. It smelled like home.

They flattened the cover of the nasty trash receptacle, planning to use it as a platform. They stealthily rolled it beneath the rusty fire escape that led to the second story of the aged building. Angel climbed up first and Levi followed up the rear.

The motion was familiar to Levi; pull-ups and other calisthenics were a large portion of his daily workout routine upstate. Except, this pull-up wasn't to inflate his tree-trunk chest any further, it was to yield him some soft gash; something he hadn't felt against his hard cock in over fifteen years.

He was tired of the same loose, grain-caked, blood-oozing assholes that he'd been punishing in the pen. He was tired of having to close his eyes and imagine he was reaming out a hoodrat with a fat ass and tight cunt. At some point, they always had to come back open and the reality was that of manly features, plasma, feces, and bacteria. It was time to feel a bitch again.

They peered in through the glass window; Oliver and Lydia were sound asleep. Angel watched Oliver's pot belly rise and fall a few times before he checked the window—it was open. Who would think they needed to lock a window on the second floor anyway? Angel carefully closed it shut after they crept through, and with the caution of cat burglars, they searched the house before circling back to the room they entered from.

“Wake up, sleeping beauty,” Angel whispered after laying an open hand slap across Oliver's clean-shaven cheek.

As Angel dragged Oliver out from his bed, his eyes opened up to what he believed was another nightmare. His dreams were typically the one place where he could wander away and allow his stress level to drop. A place where he was safe from his fears and the cruelty he was otherwise constantly bombarded by.

He shook himself in disbelief as he saw a masked hulking man clutching a pistol in his goliath hand by the foot of his bed. The curse of his sour, fermenting existence had torn him from his lone, tragic ecstasy. Even though it was a false ecstasy, the matrix T-bone steak was all he had and what he'd come to cherish most.

Angel smacked him with ruthless force on the bridge of his nose with his dragon knife handle. The warm red poured from the rip in his skin and rapidly ran from his nostrils. He fell back into the corner of the room, stunned, and watched his wife awaken. Oliver imagined that looking into Lydia's face would have been almost the same as looking into a mirror.

As Levi unbuckled his belt, the harsh horror of the situation quickly sunk in. Levi's massive sausage fingers tore off her

nightgown with ease. She was speechless, grasping for words, but her body reacted by pushing his beastly mitts away. He balled his fingers up and sent the hammy fist at the crown of her mouth. Her plump lower lip split proudly and two of her bottom teeth slid back down her esophagus. She coughed and gagged, but couldn't avoid swallowing the slick enamel. Lydia's body jerked involuntarily, causing Levi to lay in a second lick, this time, pistol-whipping her eye socket. The strike was so fierce that it almost vaulted her back into the dreamlike state she'd awoken from.

"Nooo! Leave her be!" Oliver begged, knowing that was about all he could do.

Angel unleashed the blade with a dizzying swiftness and haphazardly cut into his neck blubber. "Maybe if you fuckin' remembered me, I wouldn't have to remember you, fat boy."

Oliver looked away from Lydia for a moment, ensnared by the sparkle of Angel's gold-plated fang above him.

"What the fuck are you complaining about anyway? You're about to get a free show. And my man here is a beast. After this, I bet you the missus gonna be sayin' she ain't been fucked so good in a long time, you feel me?" His laughter was heartless and utterly desensitized.

They both turned back to the bed where Levi was still having trouble getting inside Lydia. His bulk was too wide to gain entry without her being wet. She let out a pair of disoriented coughs, still choking on her own blood. "I know what we can do," Levi's large meat hooks stretched toward her, one grabbing the back of her head and the other cupped out in front of her mouth. He shook her skull forward, draining Lydia's oral leakage into his palm. Then he hacked up a rubbery clam from the depths of his throat phlegm and spat it into the liquid he'd been able to gather from her.

He rubbed most of the collective into her bone-dry snatch and used his enormous fingers to forcibly stretch her boundaries. The bit that remained he used to lubricate his own

still-solid shaft. As he pushed his pulsating member back in, she immediately came awake again.

“Ollie! Ollie!” her screams were bloodcurdling and appropriate.

“You better keep it down, bitch, or I’ll take ya fuckin’ tongue off.” Angel’s threats came with a few licks into the air in her direction, “Or I can just cut the fat boy’s windpipe instead.”

“Help meeee, please...” she continued to express the torment she was enduring.

“It’s okay, I don’t mind it when they scream, it’s just when they squirm that it’s a problem,” Levi snickered, still enjoying every minute of it. He ramped up his speed and held the gun barrel to her skull. As he drew the hammer back, he asked her, “You like that cock, bitch? I can see you don’t wanna like it, you’re not supposed to like it... but you do, don’t you?”

As her lips felt the solid mass continue to drill into her, she gave in. Her mind was exhausted, the terror was tireless. She wondered if his load or her brains would blow first. Lydia’s abused body shook with a bizarre pleasure she would have never admitted. Levi was right, it wasn’t just talk. She lost control and the chalky white began to overrun the combination of claret mucus that once coated the majority of Levi’s veiny cock.

Oliver watched in degradation and dismay as the creamy explosion erupted from between Lydia’s quivering legs. An orgasm for the ages, the likes of which he’d never come close to producing unveiled before his eyes.

His cowardice still rendered him immobile but the rage inside was growing. His rage for Angel and Levi, his rage for Lydia, and his rage for his place in life. Tears welled up in his pupils but they weren’t tears of sadness, they were tears of hate.

“Damn, look at that bitch go, like milkin’ a fuckin’ cow. She ain’t never felt dick like that before,” Angel wasn’t just

talking smack, even he was impressed with the results.

The combination of indignity and dirtiness that Lydia found herself experiencing was rock bottom. She was mortified by her body's reaction and a sad guiltiness crept up inside her. She'd never had a rape fantasy before; as a woman who erred more on the conservative side, there was almost no kink to her curriculum. She felt sick. If she was holding the gun in her hand, she would have overlooked Levi and just turned it on herself.

"What the fuck," Levi complained as his rhythm began to stall. His frustration was mounting as he watched Lydia having all the fun. "Ugly ass bitch," he spat on her broken face, trying to help rile himself up to blow his load.

"Stop it! Stop it, goddamn it!" Oliver was still fear-stricken but the blossoming thoughts of wrath somehow pushed the words out his mouth.

Levi looked at him, upset more at himself than anything. Fifteen years without a woman and he couldn't bust, now some fuckface was popping off at the gums, muddling his concentration. He felt a foul mood elevating within him. He'd recaptured the hazy aggravated temperament he'd found himself in all too often during his time locked away.

He removed himself from Lydia, the clumpy gunk mixture on his shaft from her climax and their other unified fluids shimmered in the moonlight. "You got a strong mouth on ya, don't you now? Making orders like that, I'd have to assume so." Levi looked at Angel still holding the cutter to his windpipe. "Step aside," Angel did as Levi instructed and shifted his attention to Lydia who watched intently as the colossal figure approached her husband.

"I'ma let you taste something that a chump like you'd never get to taste without me." He used two digits from each of his massive hands to pry open Oliver's upper and lower jaws. His tongue flailed around wildly like a serpent in water as the blood fell down from the cuts on his face. "I'm gonna let you try the taste of a satisfied woman."

Levi held the steel to his forehead and thrust his still erect member into Oliver's reluctant orifice until his cum-congealed helmet was scraping harshly against his uvula. Still nearly useless due to his timidity, all Oliver could do was press his palms slightly against Levi's thighs like a chick that took it a little too deep in a porno flick. His wife's vile solutions were the consistency of salty gravy left out overnight.

"See that, that's what pleasure tastes like," Levi said, getting into it, closing his eyes and thinking about Lydia losing it.

The tears flowed freely from Oliver's eyes as the defilement of his pride and manhood spawned illness. He continued to gag for air while Levi railed him mercilessly. There was nothing he could do but pray it would end. As the assault continued, his gaze drifted from Levi's shaggy abs over to his wife. She sat still as a picture watching on the bed. Her broken face was seeping red over her bare breasts. Her head was cocked specifically in his direction. Why could he see her missing lower teeth?

She's smiling. She's enjoying watching this sick fuck do this to me... Why are you smiling at me?!

Oliver's thought process created a new wrinkle of depression in his brain. She looked like a full-blown freak, a mad woman. Who could be 'happy' about such an incident unfolding before them? His total emasculation was on display and she couldn't be more jubilant. Maybe she didn't want to feel alone in her plight, that much he could understand. However, finding the slightest semblance of joy in the abortion of an evening that they were being forced to endure felt wholly inhuman to him.

It was the final straw; he couldn't hold back any longer. Oliver could swear he heard her laughing as the briny load burst down his beefy throat. If there was one auspicious aspect about how the series of unfortunate events panned out, it was that his vomit rumbled up in a mighty wave that forced Levi's nut back up before he could swallow it.

Levi didn't flinch and finished right up despite the upheaval and hot chunky barf that coated his nether regions. Once he felt complete, he wiped himself off on the bedspread and turned back to face a still puking Oliver.

"You're welcome," Levi chuckled. Angel added to the volume of overall amusement that seemed to continue climbing for both of them.

"Fuck... you..." Oliver mustered in between heaves. "This isn't over..."

Levi looked at Angel, almost impressed by the chicken shit's resiliency. He sure could take a beating and put up with some horror. The spirit of most men cut from such a cowardly cloth would have been broken long ago.

Angel stepped back out from the background and piped up again, "You ain't gonna do shit, your cracker ass is straight, bitch."

Levi nodded his head in agreement, "I moved up north when I was younger, but where I'm from, we got a name for faggots like you. You're yella. Lettin' another man have at your lady is bad enough, but lettin' him have you afterward? That might be the most yella thing that I ever seen. I think it'd be wise for you to keep your mouth shut now. I think it's already had its fill. Just some friendly advice, seein' as we could kill you both right now if we wanted."

"And don't you think this is over, Cracker-Jack. We'll be back whenever we want, and next time when we take it, you better have better manners. Maybe if you have manners next time, things won't get so fucked up in here," Angel held up his blade and it sparkled in unison with his gold tooth. "And I got a good feeling that you gonna remember me forever now."

For the first time, it all clicked—the dragon handle on the knife, the gold front tooth, the outpouring of innuendo. With all the commotion, Oliver hadn't even realized it was the same psycho that threatened them in the store earlier. As a burst of

slashes from the claw-like steel sliced through the side of his face, the last thing he felt was the frenzy.

He imagined he was a different man. One that was a moldy reflection of the filth that he was surrounded by. He imagined that the knife penetrating his cheek was in his hand. As his visual faded to black, he imagined cutting open Angel and his friend's chests and pulling out both of their still-beating hearts.

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AFTERMATH



“Would you be up to answering a few questions?” Detective Max Treadwell stood beside Oliver’s bedside and took the cap off of his pen in anticipation. Oliver was laid up in a bad way, his eyes had finally come open just moments ago.

He was a mess; it took multiple rows of stitches to hold his Halloween-mask-looking face together. It looked more like an old piece of cloth that had been repaired countless times than his body’s exterior. A purple gloom ringed around his eyes and hovered depressingly above a crooked nose bone and puffy cheeks. As he felt the drip of the IV in his arm, flashes of the attack trickled back into his mind. The physical aftermath would be nothing compared to the emotional.

“Where’s Lydia?” The weakness in Oliver’s tenor was miserable. He adjusted his body in bed, feeling discomfort in his backside.

“She’s fine, she’s right down the hall.”

“Fine?” If he had the energy to sound incensed or sarcastic, one or both might have conveyed his response.

“I mean... her injuries are not as severe as yours. She has a black eye, a facial laceration, and a couple of missing teeth.”

“Right, that’s nothing.”

“Listen, Mr. Fitch, I’m not here to downplay what happened. If I’m coming off that way, I apologize. I just want to help figure out who did this to you and put them away. Plain and simple, I’m on your side. I know these people are sick and I’m sorry we couldn’t get them off the street before... well, before all this...”

Treadwell seemed to genuinely care. Oliver had never met the man before but he didn’t seem like the rest of the asshole beat-walkers he was used to dealing with. Speaking of asshole beat-walkers, just outside the door, Oliver could see Officer Thomas’s navy-blue uniform and psychotic smirk. Officer Winston Price, one of his other dirtbag buddies, hovered by the entrance alongside him, equally amused.

Oliver had seen Officer Price hanging around on a few occasions at the Stop N’ Go in the past. In his estimation, he seemed like just as big of an asshole as Thomas (which was saying something). They both seemed entertained by the horrific situation that Oliver had woken up to. They made stiff eye contact with Oliver while maintaining their visible exultation.

“So, what do you say? A few questions and then I’m out of your hair?”

Oliver shifted his attention back to Treadwell. *You should never say ‘out of your hair’ to a balding man*, he thought. It was good to know humor wasn’t entirely lost in him, internally at least.

“Sure,” he muttered dolefully.

“Can you tell me what you remember?”

“I woke up and two masked men were in my bedroom, one had a knife and the other had a gun.”

“And judging by you and your wife’s condition, they hurt you, right?”

Oliver paused for a moment, pondering his response. Was Treadwell worth trusting? Since purchasing the Stop N’ Go, he had never enjoyed any positive experiences with the police. It was a long run of intimidation and extortion to some extent. He sounded reasonable and concerned. Oliver wanted to believe he was on the up and up but the red flag was the company he kept. He’d showed up with that self-serving slime bucket, Officer Thomas. Could he really trust a man that worked beside a psychopath?

“What did Lydia tell you?”

“She said that you were both beaten... and cut... and... she said you were both raped...” Speaking man to man, it was difficult and highly awkward for Treadwell to let the last part out but he knew it needed to be said.

Oliver’s attention was immediately pulled back to Officer Thomas. He made a loud snorting noise like he was trying with everything to hold back his laughter just before cutting a thunderous roar loose with his peer at the doorway. Cyclones of fury spiraled in Oliver’s eyes and the pain of his backside suddenly felt deeper. It burned. It felt like it was inside him. What had they done to him?

Treadwell shot a look at them immediately, “Close the fuckin’ door now, Thomas! NOW!” The door slammed shut and the detective engaged with Oliver again.

Treadwell observed him staring off blankly, as his glare drifted through the window blinds, he could tell that Oliver was wishing he was anywhere but in that hospital bed. His pathetic pride, which was already nearly non-existent before the grueling altercation, had now been demolished completely.

It felt impossible for Oliver to talk about the violation he’d endured now. His whole body ached and his confidence had

been slashed to ribbons along with his face. He had nothing to live for.

“What did she say exactly?” Oliver didn’t truly desire to know the answer; if he was being honest with himself, he feared it. But he knew that he would have to find out one way or another. He remembered the beating. He remembered the facial abuse (both sexual and physical), but after that, it had all gone black. *What else did those fucking bastards do to me?*

“After the men that broke into your house beat and cut up the both of you, they raped Lydia. She says, after that, one of the men, the larger one, then forced you to fellate him... I know this is difficult, Oliver... but I’m just gonna need you to corroborate her statement. Is that how you remember it?”

He tried not to cry but when Oliver saw the stark pity, blushing, and chilling disgust controlling Treadwell’s mannerisms, it only amplified his own self-loathing. This hard-boiled investigator had probably seen and heard it all. A decapitated baby rotting in the trash didn’t make him flinch, the smell of necrosis ripening and setting in didn’t flip a tick on his Richter scale. But he could see it on him plain as day, he’d never seen a level of pusillanimity of this magnitude. The worst part was, he could tell he was still holding something back.

As he bawled uncontrollably, the newly rejoined skin stretched. The thread holding his face together was distending as blood drained out from the sagging reconstruction and mixed with his trails of sorrow. Amongst the wretchedness that was his survival, there was still something else. Something malevolent gnawing at his soul.

He didn’t even have to answer the question for Treadwell—his reaction said it all. Treadwell wished he could have just walked away and given the man some privacy, a few moments of peace after the war he’d been through. But, unfortunately, there was one more thing he had to talk about with him.

“Do you remember what happened after that, Mr. Fitch?” Treadwell bit his bottom lip as he watched him try to regain

his composure.

He weighed his options and considered if telling him the truth would bring more suffering his way. He knew Officer Thomas was a filthy piece of shit, he had seen him acting all buddy-buddy with Angel and many other goons that had been around the store. Naturally, that connection left Oliver to wonder about the rest of the force. Corruption in so many instances starts at the top and seeps down to the foot soldiers, so he could only assume that was the case on this occasion.

He wasn't sure why but he trusted Treadwell. It still wasn't enough to give him a name though. While he damn well knew it was Angel Rodriguez's doing, in Oliver's blackened eyes, squealing would be more trouble than it was worth. "They slashed my goddamn face after that."

"You mentioned they were both wearing masks, did you get a look at anything that might help us identify them, maybe a tattoo or—"

"No."

"What about accents, how did they sound?"

"I can't remember."

"Did you notice what kind of gun they used?"

"I don't know a whole lot about guns, it was a handgun, that's about as much as I can tell you."

Treadwell's body started to tighten up like he was preparing to be in a high-speed car wreck. He paused before transitioning, trying to keep his approach as delicate as possible.

"Mr. Fitch... do you remember anything after they cut your face?"

"No," Treadwell's reluctance was beginning to wear on him, "but apparently you do, so why don't you just tell me what the hell happened? What did they do to me?!" A rare outburst escaped him before he could think about what he was saying.

Treadwell calculated carefully, “That’s the difficult part, Oliver, it’s not what they did to you per se, it’s what they forced Lydia to do to you.”

“What did she say?” he whispered, defeated, feeling his innards tingle and twitch.

“She said that they forced her...”

“Forced her to do what!”

“They forced her to sodomize you with a knife and pour bleach inside you.” Treadwell noticed that Oliver’s tears had dried up and all that was left was a dark detestation. He just hoped the animosity that looked ready to spew out of him wasn’t aimed at the wrong people.

“Your wife... she wanted me to tell you that she’s sorry. They would have killed her if she didn’t go through with it. They had a loaded gun in her mouth the entire time.”

The snapshot of Lydia sitting on the bed while he was being defiled raced back into his mind. Her abhorrent, shattered leer was a haunting moment that was now unforgettable. While he knelt, bleeding and devastated, sensing the skid-mark of dignity he had left being destroyed, she couldn’t have been happier. Lydia’s displeasure with him and their fading connection was overtly evident. So much so that he couldn’t help but wonder if she took any pleasure in mutilating his gutted manhole. If she reveled in pouring the stinging chemicals into his butchered orifice. *Most likely*, he estimated.

Treadwell continued his placid persistence and tried to ask a few more questions. Oliver could hear nothing else but the destitute screams of that evening playing over in his mangled head. He could see nothing else but their gore and secretions. The betrayal and pain were throbbing as a dark lust continued to swell inside him.

Treadwell seemed to take the hint when Oliver clammed up. After another transitory moment of awkward silence, he politely laid his card on top of Oliver’s wallet and said,

“Well... if you remember anything else, or... if you need anything, just give me a call, okay?”

He didn't offer a response or say another word to anyone else. There was nothing that could be said to change the jarring tragedy that he was now forever bonded to. Oliver just closed his puffy and purple salty eyelids. Then firmed up his aching jawbone and clenched his teeth.

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HOMECOMING HELL



Oliver's tissues had finally bonded again and he was healed enough that the doctors felt comfortable sending him home. He glanced into a mirror that reflected progress; his shiners had dissipated and the stitches in his face had dissolved. While he couldn't see them, the two dozen in his rectal cavity had assimilated into his tender flesh—they had finally glued his tract back together and made it serviceable again.

Most of the physical destruction done had been restored but his profile now held a series of gut-churning, everlasting indentations; memories to last a lifetime. He still looked like a jigsaw puzzle of some monster set loose in a hospital, but it was the best shape they could get him in.

The medical staff was confident enough to remove his shit bag and catheter after he passed the milestone of having his first successful bowel movement since the attack. He limped away from his new gruesome reflection and slid on a pair of gray sweatpants and a Miller High Life t-shirt that Lydia had sent to him in the mail.

They hadn't seen each other since the attack, which was probably for the best. He didn't expect her to pick him up and his prediction held true. Because of her lingering absence the medical staff had made him stay a few extra days until they were confident he could fend for himself. When they asked him who else they could call a sad realization dawned on him; there was no one else.

He had Ramon's phone number and had even considered calling him, but felt too uncomfortable. His embarrassment around the entire situation was enough to self-isolate. Furthermore, thrusting his burden upon Ramon just wasn't his style. After some additional convincing the doctors finally signed off on his release.

Oliver limped his way out through an empty main lobby and then back into the relentless downpour that never seemed to end. The rain left his thinning hair curled and his clothing soaked through before he found shelter at the bus stop.

The unhinged transient that shared the stop bench beside him looked sickly. He smelled of raw sewage and his pupils were both overcast with dense cloudy cataracts. His cleft lip shuddered and, as he opened his mouth, the smell of acidic vomit and decay infected the surrounding air.

"Y-you one ugly, F-F-Frankenstien-looking mutha fucka now, ain't cha?"

Oliver ignored the weird wanderer's appalling merriment, concerned that any acknowledgement would only escalate their interaction. Thankfully, the bus brakes shrieked over his continued mindless ramblings just a short time later. Oliver let the vagrant board first and sat as far away from the sinister bum as possible.

He didn't want to think about what needed to be said between Lydia and himself upon arrival. He didn't have the will to face it. He hoped they could just say nothing for some time until they were able to stomach the sight of each other again. But he was a realist, in his mind, that was a low probability.

When the tired bus screeched to a halt and approached the side door the dread molested him. After weeks of being laid up and thinking about it almost non-stop, he'd finally come to the conclusion that he probably wouldn't be able to live with Lydia anymore. Yet as he turned his key and opened the door to their apartment, to his surprise, he quickly realized he wouldn't have to.

As he entered the kitchen, there Lydia hung—lifeless with her top lip perking a sharp smile upward. To Oliver, it looked like relief had finally found her face. The dining table had been pushed out from under the ceiling fan that she'd been bound to. Opposite of an umbilical cord, which served as the funnel in the transfer of life, the heavy orange extension cord served only to cut it off.

She dangled a foot or two off the ground and a single chair lay toppled over underneath her. She was motionless aside from the buzz of the flies hovering about with tiny pieces of her in their bellies and the overfed squirming larvae that snaked about their host. Her greasy shoulder-length hair lay in clumps, obstructing her face but not entirely. Still, small previews of the monstrous aftermath left upon her was hinted at in her right eye and unclosed jowl.

There was a mixture of emotions that punched Oliver in the mouth all at once, like a roomful of voices all trying to make a point at the exact same time. The unavoidable face-to-face confrontation he'd been dreading had shockingly been avoided. A conversation regarding the delight he saw on her beaten mug and the ghastly abuses she'd carried out upon him while he lay leaking and unconscious were no longer possible. Well, maybe not impossible, but they'd be entirely one-sided at the least. While uncomfortable, in its finality, was that a good thing?

Part of him wanted to forget everything that happened and remember her in a good light. Remember her as the person he'd fallen in love with before it all started to unravel. The person who wasn't so quick to dump shit on him every day.

Like Ramon, they too used to travel to the beach almost every weekend, the calm and sandy shores of relaxation was one of their favorite places to be. Maybe it wasn't just Angel and Officer Thomas that were pissing on his beaches, maybe it was her too...

They both used to be outgoing and romantic and excited to see each other. Racing home to embrace with a lively passion and purpose. But as success became more elusive, the tension between them was amplified. As the bottom feeders of society began to surround them, their negativity spread like a rapidly developing cancer until, eventually, their existence was just an extension of it.

Oliver never took it out on Lydia but she couldn't help herself. Part of him hated what she'd become. The belittling, the name-calling, the predictable daily emasculation. It was all unavoidable as of late until Oliver suddenly found himself having to avoid eggshells no matter what direction he stepped.

Part of him thought she should pay for that. Part of him thought she should have been confronted about her concluding engagements with him. The sick beam of dark satisfaction that sat on her face after she'd finished squirting with joy from the jailhouse degenerate's pounding.

He looked up at her dank and slimy corpse again, confronted by that nearly identical smile. It was still aimed right at him, drilling down into his weathered soul. Part of him thought Lydia was aware that she owed him some retribution from all the punishment she'd heaped upon him, but instead, she'd taken the cheap way out.

There was still an embarrassment smarting about the recurring theme of their relationship, their unhappiness and that he'd never been man enough to protect her. Hours before, the last words she'd spoken to him outside of the pleas howled during her violation were: "You ruined my life!" That made things pretty clear...

Oliver buried her perspective, there were things she still didn't understand. "Don't you get it? You screwed up my life

too! Did you think this was what I wanted for us? To rot away in this sick fucking city? To hear your mouth every day?! Well, excuse me! I've been so busy trying to keep this place afloat, trying to keep us off the goddamn street! You don't understand the pressure!" A sudsy froth crawled down to his chin.

He slapped her hardened head viciously, "Wipe that fucking smile off your face!" Oliver's cheeks ached in the areas they had been recently unmade; the fresh regenerating tissue was still tender and his method of venting his aggression would surely not have been approved as part of his rehab effort.

The one-sided rant tied to their financial status had triggered him, there were things happening outside of his recovery and Lydia's suicide. He'd been in the hospital for over two weeks and Lydia looked ripe enough to pick and throw away. "She must have killed herself before paying the mortgage..." he said to himself, eyes widening. The implications could be catastrophic—he would be both alone and homeless.

He looked up and made note of the advanced decomposition that blanketed his wife's corpse. He was not a forensic expert but it seemed obvious that she'd been there awhile. He was going to need to think about everything before calling the police. They were the last people he wanted to see. He could hear Treadwell's next set of questions playing in his mind while Officer Thomas laughed in amusement.

"That's right, you fat jellyfish, I didn't pay the mortgage! So, you enjoy your last few weeks because I've finally gotten rid of this monstrosity that you dragged us into! This scum-magnet is finished!" A deranged cackle accompanied the impossible words that Oliver was hearing project aloud from his deceased wife.

The rage boiled more destructively in his aching and bruised guts. *Even in death, she won't stop*, he thought. His eyes widened with frenzy and turmoil while his crowned molars grinded harshly against one another.

“I had to scrape and scrounge the courage to choke to death because I knew you wouldn’t protect me! Those animals were coming back for us and you would have just let it happen! Just like you always let it happen. Tail between your legs like a dog trembling before his master. Like that degenerate you let rape us said, you’re yellow. Yellow as the sun! Yellow as the piss in the goddamn toilet!”

“What did you want me to do?! They had a gun! Did you want them to shoot you in the head?! Shoot me in the head?! That’s probably exactly what you wanted! Oliver bellowed back at Lydia’s sad and motionless corpse.

“You just don’t get it, Ollie, do you? It’s not my fault you’re a fucking pussy!”

“And you took the easy way out! I’m still here, and guess what? This time, you checked out too early. This time, you’re gonna miss out because the repercussions are en route!” He was speaking with a new confidence surging inside him. Looking at Lydia’s cold, distorted face, he could almost see the expression shift. It was like there was some kind of acknowledgement.

“I was the strong one, not you! I was so strong that after the rape-kit and slews of endless tests I told them to fuck off! I’m all done with them just like I was all done with you. No more follow ups, not more updates, no more check ins! And so I moved on from it... permanently.”

“You’ll see. All of those two-bit dust-sniffing slimebuckets haven’t seen the last of me. There’s gonna be payback this time around, and it’s gonna be ten-fold. You’ll see, in fact, I’ll make sure you’re there to see because you can’t walk away this time, Lydia. You’re gonna have to hang around for as long as I fucking please.”

A sick smile that might be something psych ward nurses are typically faced with manifested on his face. She thought she could escape him but, at the very least, he still had her vehicle, the thing that everyone is remembered by most. But before he

could even think about opening that whole can of maggots, he needed to make a stop.

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NO PITY FOR THE PITIFUL



When Oliver arrived inside the Landmark Credit Union, he looked less like a client and more like he might've shown up to rob the joint. Although he'd driven there, his jogging pants were still soaked through from earlier and the shoelaces of his sneakers remained untied.

His bulging belly and matted hair gave him the aura of self-neglect, but more so than any clothing or accessories, it was his expression that looked the most dangerous. The psychosis screeched from his face which looked like the post-Thanksgiving main dish; carved to excess.

He slyly bypassed the greeter who was distracted by an attractive client and stepped right into the office of the branch manager, Evelyn Watts.

Oliver eavesdropped momentarily just as she finished up on the phone, "Well, yeah, that was the tenth foreclosure this month. Of course, I told you I would find a way. We always reach our quotas here, Mr. Jacobs. What, did you think I would miss the payout?"

She finally noticed a soggy Oliver trudging closer to her desk, he looked even more pathetic and infantile than usual. She held up her index finger, telling him to wait, but still not making eye contact. “Alright then, that sounds excellent. Absolutely, we look forward to seeing you soon,” she said, dropping the phone back onto the receiver and looking up.

“Mr. Fitch, you can’t just come into my office unannounced. Sometimes, I have important calls, I know *you* wouldn’t really understand that... but how exactly can I help you?” She asked the question but seemed more interested with the paperwork laid out across her desk. She didn’t even make mention of the slashes that dragged all around and across his face. It was clear he had been through massive trauma but Evelyn just wanted to avoid the drama.

Oliver had bad vibes from the moment he’d stepped into the office. Listening to the manager boast about foreclosures didn’t bode well for his situation. “I think we might have missed our last payment. I have the money, it’s in our checking account, there were just... there were some extenuating circumstances.”

“We’ve been over this before, Mr. Fitch, that’s why I’ve been suggesting that you set up automatic payment.”

“Why would I set that up when it’s taken me this long to get the money? I set it up before and it kept causing return fees to be charged on my account, taking more money that I clearly don’t have. It’s just... it’s been a difficult year and business has been terrible.”

“Well, either way, I suppose it’s a moot point now. You’re correct, Mr. Fitch, you did, in fact, miss payment again. Which has sadly resulted in the foreclosure of the property. I’m sorry, but you’re four payments behind now, and I’m afraid there’s nothing we can do any longer.” She made a few markings on the paper under her nose, already focused on what came next. The final straw of Oliver’s downfall was clearly no skin off her back.

“But, you can’t! The store it’s... it’s all I have, I’ll be homeless.”

The scribbling of her pen to the paper was the only response he was receiving. Her emotionless robotic empathy was a slap in the face. The conversation she was having that he’d happened upon said it all. She was a fucking parasite; no better than the street scum and uniformed killers he dealt with on the regular.

Sure, she wasn’t spilling blood by stabbing or shooting people, but she was sucking it up like a rubbery pond leech. A modern vampire filling up on their plasma, capturing their livelihood and just waiting for their downfall to begin before she unhooked her fangs and left them an empty shell.

“LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT ME, DAMN IT!” He slammed his fist on her desk in anger. “Since I’ve walked in here, you haven’t so much as made eye contact with me. I was almost fucking murdered a few weeks ago! I look like a goddamn monster! Can’t you see that or do you not give a shit?”

Evelyn pressed a small white button under her desk frantically. “While I understand and I’m sorry to hear that... what about your wife, Mr. Fitch? It seems she should have taken over those duties in your absence, she’s on the account also, isn’t she?”

“My wife is fucking dead! I found her covered in bugs hanging from the ceiling fan.” Somehow, as he finished the latter part of his explanation, the thought seemed to calm him. His roller coaster of emotional outburst had hit a lull.

He was interested to see how she might audaciously try to dispel that point but she sat in silence. A few seconds later, it became apparent what she’d been waiting for.

A brutish man in a security outfit entered the office. He didn’t say a word to him, he just hooked his bicep around Oliver’s inflated throat and dragged him over the back of the chair and out the door.

The last thing he heard while the hired muscle's chokehold pulled him away was an even cockier version of Evelyn's illogical ever-ringing suggestion: "Well, I guess you should have just set up automatic payment then, you fucking idiot."

As the security guard tossed him out into the rain, he stumbled, falling into a massive puddle of gray water. He could feel the scrapes gouging into his hands and elbows as he braced himself for the fall. He heard the door close behind him and pulled his face from the pool of rainwater and dirt.

Oliver gasped for air and gagged on some of the brown liquid he'd accidentally swallowed during his tumble. To his chagrin, Officer Thomas sat a few feet away in his blue and white cruiser—the same unhinged self-advantageous look sparkled in his eyes as if it never took a rest.

He stepped out of his car and approached him leisurely, squatting down to reach a similar eye level. "Oliver, buddy, are you causing problems in here now? Well, listen, we might be in the big city but you should know by now, we have a real small-town feel here. Let me give you some advice, and if you're smart, if you have the ability to adapt, you will. In a warzone like this, you gotta evolve before you dissolve, you know what I mean? Before you just vanish and fucking melt away into people's memories. Until all you are anymore is a faded pathetic memory, you understand?"

Officer Thomas backhanded Oliver across his scar tissue, "Answer me, you fat prick! Do you understand?!" Oliver nodded his head rapidly in response as Officer Thomas pointed to the building he'd just been thrown out of.

"You know, it's kind of funny seeing you here because I had a message for you anyway. I'm not the kinda guy you want looking for you, but after you and your amigo decided to mouth off the other day, I wanted to make sure you remember who the big swinging dick is around here."

His grin was uncomfortable. Oliver knew that if this asshole was on his trail, he was just a stone's throw from death's doorstep.

“So, I suggest you listen and listen closely. Whether it’s in there or out here, or anywhere really, you need to be respectful and mindful. Continue to piss off the players and you won’t have any problems to worry about, I promise you that. Your little everyday struggles won’t mean shit when your thick head gets cracked and spills out all over the sidewalk. Because dead men don’t have problems anymore.”

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a white flier that was folded twice. “Or maybe you will have some problems still,” he suggested, pushing the paper into Oliver’s chest and forcing him to take hold of it.

“Maybe you like touching young girls as much as your little smart-mouthed spic pal too?” He stood up, most likely tiring of the ever-pounding falling water. “And remember, I’m always watching. I decide when your time’s up,” Officer Thomas said, pointing to his gaudy wristwatch before turning away from him.

As the unhinged officer took off in his squad car, lights flashing and siren blaring with nowhere to go, Oliver unfolded the sheet. The ink ran down the paper that had a picture of Ramon’s face with the words “Sex Offender” at the top.

It also detailed a slew of despicable charges that had been levied against him. Charges that Oliver knew damn well were all bogus. Charges that he knew were pulled out of thin air by that dirty son-of-a-bitch who wasn’t fit to wear the uniform. Water was running down Oliver’s cheeks but it was only the rainwater this time. He was all done crying.

THE HARDWARE



As Oliver drove through the windy and damp monsoon-like atmosphere that encompassed the city, he considered his own morals. He thought about his heart and overall makeup. Physically, he'd never so much as hurt a fly his entire life. Mentally, his record was probably even more outstanding. He'd dropped things and bumped into people accidentally, motor functions, not every result is intentional. But he'd never raised his voice or picked bones with people. He just took everything and kept it inside no matter who it had come from.

Something was changing in him. The rage was compounding with each misfortune, the hate was flourishing with each further abuse. He was being nurtured by negativity without reprieve. He could feel a dark metamorphosis taking hold of him. He was beginning to identify with the scum, maybe he was actually part of it and had just never realized it. Officer Thomas was right, maybe he needed to 'evolve or dissolve.'

He pondered the threatening advice as he parked and walked up the stairs to the upper level of the Stop N' Go.

There was a problem though... as much as he wanted to change, physically he hadn't. He still cowered before Officer Thomas. That anxious feeling that had always left him frozen during even the most minuscule conflicts still did just that.

The terror kept him stationary and action-less—a fat, blubbery punching bag for those ruthless enough to give him a thrashing. He was sure that the next time he was faced with an aggressor, it would end the same. The mere imagined concept plucked at his already inflamed nerve strings. More than anything, he was tired of being blindsided.

He turned the key and was met again by the foulness of his rotting wife. Her vile odor was pungent but smelling her was certainly better than hearing her. He dropped his keys on the table and headed for the living room when he heard her start in on him again.

“Yellow!” Lydia hissed at him.

He couldn't believe it; while he hadn't taken a moment to understand how it might be possible for her to berate him still, he now knew the first time wasn't a fluke. If he had taken a moment to look in the mirror at himself, his overall state and the madness meddling in his eyes might have answered his question. Even in death, her ridicule was somehow inescapable. His fists balled up and his knuckles went white while she continued.

“Why don't you grow a pair and look for them instead of letting them find you? Why don't you prepare for war like a real man does when someone fucks with him or his family?! You know they're coming back... you know where they are... so what are you waiting for?!”

“If you don't shut your mouth, I'll pull your tongue out with my bare hands! Do you understand me?!” He grabbed her still-hanging corpse by the shirt with both hands and shook her wildly. “I need some time to think...” he said, trailing off.

It seemed to do the trick, she piped right down for once. *She's right though, the solution was a lot simpler than the*

problem, he thought to himself, feeling a wave of comfort wash over him.

Just thinking about it made him feel different. Those savages had always gotten the jump on him. Time after time, he found himself limited to the mobility and range of a statue, and it was all because they kept finding him. They paid him a visit at the store, on the street, and even inside his own house. They had the element of surprise because they always popped up out of nowhere.

The Stop N' Go was officially closed for business, both he and what was left of Lydia only had a limited time on the property. It was time for Oliver to start doing some popping in. It was time for him to be the prepared one. It was time to unleash his rage and put an end to the perpetual tortures that plagued his days and fueled his nightmares. But first, if he was going to have any kind of shot, he needed the hardware.

He didn't need the last payment for the mortgage anymore, he just needed something to give him a chance. Oliver's inside pocket, where he normally kept his wallet, was uncharacteristically bursting. Knowing how much money he was holding gave him a weird sense of importance and clout... like they say, money is power. He drove by an army of pedestrians clenching their umbrellas as the colors of the traffic lights blurred into the river on his windshield.

After a few more blocks, he pulled his car down Pine Street. Garbage accumulations clogged up the gutters and bullet holes punctured the vinyl siding as he drove up to Ramon's apartment. He was thankful that there were no cops in sight, despite the house still being freshly draped in yellow crime scene tape.

Yellow, there it was again like some kind of sign or grim reminder. He couldn't determine which. The yellow glowed in his eyes; his hatred had been stewing for so long, it was begging to be served. All he could hear in his head was Levi's

raspy voice with his slight southern drawl: “Where I’m from, we got a name for faggots like you. You’re yella.”

Just the thought of the man made Oliver’s stomach uneasy; a physical illness was establishing within him. He quickly pushed the images of the harms bequeathed to him from his mind and ascended the stone steps. A noisiness engulfed the building, apartments were overcrowded with large families and possibly illegals. When he reached the third floor, the commotion seemed to pacify. As Oliver knocked tentatively on the white chipped door, he couldn’t hear any sounds coming out of Ramon’s apartment.

Suddenly, the door creaked open slowly until it was to the full capacity that the gold sliding chain hitched on the other side would allow. The sliver of face looked male; his presumption was confirmed by the voice that came next.

“What?” The irritation and fear in the man’s tone were balanced equally.

“Where’s Ramon?”

“He’s gone.”

“Gone where? I need to talk to him, tonight.”

“You see the fucking tape on the house, gringo?! They took him, his ass ain’t coming back anytime soon.”

“I thought that might be the case. Who are you?”

“Who am I? Man, who the fuck are you? You come around here askin’ me questions like you one time or something.”

“I’m a friend.”

“I ain’t got no friends with your bleached skin. So, you best turn around now before I come outside. Cuz if I come outside, I promise, I’m bust your ass.”

“I know Ramon’s innocent. I know he didn’t do what they’re saying he did. He’s my friend, he’s my only friend really. I wanna help.” Oliver slid the weathered piece of paper

in through the opening and the man on the other side snatched it like a crisp hundred-dollar bill.

The door shut and Oliver heard the sound of the chain slipping free. When it came back open, another man that looked eerily similar to Ramon stood before him. Alejandro Cruz was more slender and muscular than Ramon and his hair was shorter, but otherwise, they looked nearly identical.

He had about four inches on him height-wise and a chipped front tooth, taken from him by an overzealous cop growing up in Harlem. He was younger and more imposing than Ramon. The charm that radiated naturally from Ramon was non-existent in Alejandro. Whether it was just a temporary vibe being that his brother was locked up for a crime he didn't commit, or the result of a harsher lifestyle, he couldn't be sure. Oliver suspected he was born in the country as his accent wasn't foreign, it was just ghetto.

“So, who are you again?”

“Name's Oliver, I own... well, I owned the Stop N' Go convenience store a few blocks over. Ramon he, he comes by a lot. I'm not sure he ever mentioned you before, just Felicia and the boys.”

“Not surprising.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you should know, Ramon's a straight guy, he walked away from the streets a long time ago. He don't let me come around the fam anymore. Uncle Alejandro is the dirty secret.”

“Why's that?”

“I got caught up, got so caught up, in fact, that I'm permanently entangled. It's not like I wanted to be in the game forever, but the way Damien does things, it's blood in, blood out.”

“Blood in, blood out? Who's Damien?” The terminology Alejandro used was highly unfamiliar to Oliver.

“Man, you be around here and don’t know any of this? I’m saying, Damien Sanchez thinks he’s the fuckin’ Devil. He drinks some of you when you join up and then the rest of you when you leave. If you wanna quit him, you’ll be DOA. On top of that, he’ll merk your loved ones and use ‘em in sacrifices. I don’t believe in none of that but I believe he believes it, which makes it just as dangerous.”

The next logical question would be ‘how is this possible’, but Oliver already knew the answer to that. He was quite familiar with the top tier of the unethical authority figures that the city had been entrusted to, just the soldiers. Actually, the name Damien Sanchez was now ringing a bell, he’d heard Angel mention him at times in the store when he was running his mouth amongst his cohorts. He was the one responsible for all of the goons that extorted him and swamped his store and the venality of youth he’d ensnared in his wicked schemes.

“That’s unbelievable,” was all Oliver could think to say with his head in another place.

“Well, you better believe it, think of it as modern-day slavery. We all a slave to these streets and to Damien Sanchez.”

“It’s not just them. It’s the cops, the bankers, it’s everyone, the whole thing is one giant fuckin’ web of lies.”

“Yeah, no shit, now you’re getting it.”

“You sound like a reasonable person, like you have a conscience anyway, so how’d you get caught up in all this?”

“I just wanted to make some paper. The way I heard it before I met him was that Damien was just another dealer. I never wanted to hurt anybody, but once you’re in, it’s do or die.”

“Where’s Felicia and the kids?”

“They at her mom’s for a few days, after they took him, she started buggin’ out. She’s probably trying to figure out what the fuck they’re gonna do. If they could take him, why not her, why not the kids too?”

“It’s understandable. I’d be scared too. But I have a question for you, Alejandro...”

“Okay...”

“Can you get me guns?”

“For what, exactly?”

There was no way to sugarcoat it, so Oliver just said it, “I’m going to kill a lot of people.”

“Well, I can’t help you with that, man. You look all whacked out and I ain’t arming the next spree killer.”

“Not at random. These are people that hurt me, the people that hurt your brother...” Oliver bit down his lip with both of his top teeth, “The people that raped and murdered my wife.” In his mind, he knew it wasn’t outright murder but it was their actions that resulted in her sudden death, so the embellishment seemed appropriate.

Alejandro’s eyes saddened and his perspective shifted. He seemed to be listening more intently than before.

“These are people that did very bad things to me. Things so horrible that I wanna take my life. But I’m holding off... because I thought about it long and hard and need to finish things first. And I ain’t fuckin’ dying without putting them through the same hell they put me through first.”

Alejandro watched, unnerved, as Oliver’s chubby face contorted, attempting to display the impossible amount of disdain he held for the evil people in his mind. He’d become a menace to society but only to the members that had pissed on his beaches. Only to the ones that thought he was yellow.

Oliver shut his wide manic pupils and visualized the beach in his head. The same one that he and Lydia used to bask in the sun at, when it didn’t rain every day he awoke. The same place they used to sprawl out on beach towels at so free and carelessly. He felt so at ease as he turned to his beautiful and loving wife beside him.

Suddenly, she didn't look so well... it appeared that her body had gotten a bit too much sun. She began decomposing; a rapid rot spread through her and draped her body in the insects he'd seen earlier.

Suddenly, Oliver's body was buried up to the neck in the hot sand and Angel and Levi appeared masked-up and nude standing over him. The depraved duo started to piss on his helpless head. The thick, dehydrated streams of yellow pushed their way into his openings, making it difficult for him to breathe.

As he begged and struggled for air, he took in mouthfuls of their foul emissions. Then, Officer Thomas joined them, putting a third relentless flow upon him. It was even harder to find oxygen now. The cherry on top was the red furry snatch of Evelyn Watts as she squatted just above his head and added yet another river of yellow warmth.

"Yo, chill out, man! Snap out of it!" Alejandro yelled, having to physically shake him out of the twisted daydream.

He didn't know or care what he was doing moments ago. He only cared about what he saw, and what he saw were a lot of people that needed to fucking die.

"I've got the cash," he said, pulling out a wad of bills from his jacket. "If you can get me the guns, I promise you I'll kill the fuckin' pig that put your brother away. I know that doesn't spring him, but maybe you can take some comfort in his bloodshed. Maybe if he doesn't show up to trial, the case is a little harder to make stick. Hell, maybe if Officer Thomas is dead, they might look into why people wanted to kill him and find out what a scumbag he is. Either way, you can rest assured, I'll make sure he suffers... and that your brother's face is the last thing he ever sees."

Alejandro looked up at Oliver as a chill ran down his spine. The man had been warped and there was no going back. He hadn't known him for more than the few minutes that they'd spoken, but he knew he was legit unhinged. He was offering to do a courtesy in his own sick way, a very violent personal

courtesy, but for Ramon's sake, it needed to be done. He deliberately nodded his head and Oliver found himself smiling for the first time in weeks.

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THOUGHTFUL GOODBYES



The window slowly came open again, just as it had on that fateful night. Levi's hefty frame wiggled its way through the opening and a second masked man slipped in behind him. They crept toward the bed, taking notice of Lydia's golden blonde mane highlighted by the moonlight. "Smells really weird in here, you sure this bitch isn't dirty?" the second man inquired.

"What the fuck is it to a junkie like you? Get lost then, more pussy for me."

Levi grabbed her by her enchanting locks firmly, trying to awaken his love doll roughly while his partner pulled the covers off at the foot of the bed. Lydia's morbid state and advanced putrefaction was unveiled to them two-fold. Her body was stiffened and black, large portions eaten away down to the bone and organs. The larvae was still squirming and a blizzard of flies rushed toward Levi's face.

He shrieked like a female still clasping her wig as it ripped off from her body, leaving a slimy, extending trail of rancid wet between her bare skull and the morbidly moist hair.

Hundreds of air fresheners that read ‘New Car Scent!’ were pinned to her body. Atop those was a sign written in a dark shade of her lipstick that read ‘FUCK ME.’

A flurry of shots rang out from behind, which left Levi’s associate brainless. The bullets gained entry through the back of his black ski mask and caused an eruption out the front. It looked like the man’s head had puked his frontal lobe out everywhere. A small volume of the spatter layered over Levi’s astonishment, but the majority landed all over Lydia’s chest and the hand-drawn sign she held. Before Levi could even turn his head around, his kneecaps, shins, calves, and feet were all dotted with a hail of hot lead.

He crumpled to the ground, folding in on himself. He didn’t have the urge to scream, the shock and disbelief was too extreme. Especially when he got a look at the man who was standing behind him holding the Uzi submachine gun—Oliver Fitch.

His mutilated scowl was the picture of madness. He looked so happy to see Levi, like a long-lost brother. Even with the adrenaline coursing through his system, Levi still couldn’t will himself to walk—his legs had been ruined, or so he thought. Levi tried to speak some sense into Oliver but was unable to formulate any words.

A fleeting nervousness blasted through him for a moment as Oliver stared out the dark window. It was his first time ever shooting a gun and it felt so empowering, but a flash of panic treaded over him while he wondered if his actions might garner the attention of the streets.

The idea fled him quickly though and a calm set in as he recalled that the sound of gunshots was as common as a dog barking in his city. The streets were like a warzone except that people never ran toward the shots, they just looked away and minded their own fucking business. They all were living in the constant fear of the gruesome retribution that always accompanied a snitch’s departure.

Oliver set the Uzi down on the dresser behind him and opened the closet door. A bag of tools filled to capacity sat beside a sledgehammer that was leaning against the wall. After Alejandro presented him with an arsenal, he made another stop at the hardware store for some other goodies.

As he picked up the sledge, its weight threw him off balance but he quickly regained his footing. He raised the hammer so high that he scraped the ceiling; some crumbles of the building materials fell along with the motivated thrust of the hammer. It landed square on his left ankle, which was already fractured from the gunfire. The velocity of the strike snapped it clean and mashed the meat around the joint.

Levi was making some noise after that. All of a sudden, he was screaming and spooked like the little coward he'd claimed Oliver was. "Please, mister! My fuckin' ankle, it's gone, oh, Jesus Christ! Help me, it's fuckin' gone! You've made your point! I'm sorry!"

"Sorry? You're sorry? Actually, I'm sorry, boss. I hate to tell you, but I still have quite a few more points to make," Oliver said with a sinister snicker.

He swung it again in a windmill fashion with a deceptive speed considering his unpolished figure. Another sickening CRACK filled the room as the opposite shin splintered and folded back into itself like a flattened letter V.

Levi whimpered like a newborn puppy getting bullied. He produced some strange sounds that were hard to picture leaving the lips of a hardened bastard like him. "OH, GOD, OH, JESUS, PLEASE STOP! MAKE HIM STOP, PLEASE!" The big tough man was getting supernatural, asking other entities to come to his rescue, to make the pain magically go away.

"Hey there," Oliver placed his sweaty hand on Levi's left cheek and looked him in the eyes. "It's best you just accept it now, come to grips with it because there's no way out for you. I prayed to the same God and Jesus while you were cumming in my throat, but that didn't stop your load now, did it? Why

are you even praying to God anyway? Shouldn't an evil pile of shit like you be praying to Satan?" Oliver began to unbuckle his pants and take out his dick. It was Vienna-sausage-sized and nearly tucked into itself, but he brandished it proudly nonetheless.

"Matter of fact, don't you work for Satan? At least you think you do, but I got news for you, he's not because I'm the Devil, and tonight, I've come to bring you home." Oliver was glowing from the overspill of odium. "And when I'm done showing you my wrath, I'll come home and meet you. Then we can start this up all over again."

Oliver was like a gargoyle coming to life, the yellow started to spray all over Levi's gore-drenched grill, the flavors of his junkie friend's face and the bitter urine made a revolting pairing. Oliver had made sure to drink a lot of water and beer each day as he waited for them to return like they'd threatened to. He'd filled his bladder to capacity for this special occasion.

"Who's yellow now, you big faggot? I wanna hear you say it! Who's yellow now, you piece of trash!" Levi was sobbing like a baby; his tears were lost in the reservoir of relevance and irony that was shooting from Oliver's tip.

"F-Fuck you."

Levi's defiance had returned but that didn't solve his exhaustion and stupor. The trauma of his conundrum and loss of blood had left his healthy tanned exterior glossed over with a new ghostly shade. He was barely able to mouth the insult, let alone move or put up a fight.

"Well, you already did that now, didn't you?"

Oliver paused his piss purge and retrieved a pair of poultry shears from his back pocket as he recalled his humiliation. Without warning, he stretched Levi's right ear and cut clean through the base. A fountain of ruby spilled outward, which Oliver perceived almost as a work of art.

He enjoyed watching the growing panic on Levi's face as he awoke from his distressed auto-pilot state. He was gasping

mindlessly at nothing, his hands showering in his own warmth as if them being there could somehow change his horrific disfigurement. Oliver held up his quivering ear for him to see before tossing it at his face.

He started the golden shower up again, “Say it, you son of a bitch! SAY IT NOW!”

“I’m... I’m yella.” Levi finally gave in, starting to let his tears flow again. He’d been broken by the broken.

“Say it right! Not how your country bumpkin dumb ass says it! I make the fucking rules now, you understand?! Say it the way I want you to say it! Say yellow!”

“I’m yellow,” he mumbled on the verge of incoherence.

Oliver crouched and continued peeing on his stomach while he got in his face, “That’s right, you fucking piece of shit, *you’re* yellow. Over here crying like a little girl, Jesus, even I didn’t cry this much when you and your boyfriend disfigured me. When you forced my wife to peg me with a fuckin’ knife blade. You know, that was pretty creative actually. When the detective explained it to me, I said to myself, ‘Well, yeah, this is awful and horrifying and life-changing and scarring, but man, they really put some thought into that.’ And I think you really do deserve some credit in that respect.”

He stood back up and put his still dribbling dick back in his pants, “But let me tell you something, I been getting *real* creative over here myself. Creative like you wouldn’t believe. I mean, after what you did to me, how could I not? It’s downright inspiring. Yep, these last few days, I just been waiting, getting real fuckin’ creative over here. I mean, I figured you’d be coming back, my wife said you paid her another visit before she killed herself and—wait, you know what? You didn’t even get to read it, let me get the note for you. You deserve to at least hear what she said before she put the noose around her neck seeing that you had such a big hand in it.”

He reached into the dresser behind him and pulled out a crumpled sheet of loose leaf. “Alright, here we go, it’s short but sweet,” Oliver paused a beat and cleared his throat. He read it like a child who’d just learned to read and was giving an oral presentation. “They came back and did it again. They said they’d never stop but that’s not why I did this. I killed myself because it’s better than being with you. —Lydia.”

Levi let out a snort, through all the torture he was enduring, he still found it comical. She had hung herself because of her poor excuse for a husband, not the atrocities that he and his fellow heartless hoods had committed against them.

“That is pretty funny, you and Angel break in here, beat her and violate her multiple times, and somehow, I’m still the bad guy. Women!” he said with a laugh, throwing up his hand as if he was mocking frustration. “I’m mean, isn’t that just ridiculous?!”

They both joined in a disturbed laugh together as Oliver scurried over to the dead masked man lying on the bed. He lifted him up and pulled the wet ski mask off along with a third of his head. He could tell it wasn’t Angel since the man had no neck tattoos or golden teeth in his mouth. He dropped the half-headed thug on the ground in front of Levi and knelt down beside him.

“You seem to like comedy from what I gather, what do you say, can I tell you one? It might be best to have a good laugh before what we’re about to get into. Whaddaya say?”

The smirk faded from Levi’s face, his adrenaline was drying up and the reality that methodically-crafted horrors were in store for him had set in.

“What’s the matter? What happened to your twinkle, boss? Let me see if we can get it back a second before we get down to business. Are you familiar with Robert Schimmel?” He waited for a response from Levi that never came.

“Comedian from a few years back, got cancer and wasn’t quite as funny after that. Anyhow, he had a great one that just

seems a little too appropriate right now. So, he goes, I never understood how when the police find a dead body, they say: ‘And the deceased had to be identified by their dental records...’ Because if they don’t know who you are, how the fuck do they know who your dentist is?” Oliver spread the dead man’s lips as if to show off his pearly whites for the punchline.

“So, where’s you’re pal with the gold tooth? Why didn’t he come back?”

Levi looked up at him, “Just fuckin’ do it. Just get it over with already.”

“Your friend, he may have dodged a bullet tonight but his ass is mine. It’s just a matter of time now.”

“Just fuckin’ do it, you cuck!”

“What are you, a Nike ad? I see what you’re doing with the names. You’re smart, trying to get me to lose my temper and just finish it. But you can save it, I can guarantee you now, you ain’t getting off that easy. Don’t get me wrong, no one understands your position more than me. There was a time when I would have done the same, but I’m not some fuckin’ punk anymore. I wished for the same thing. I mean, don’t you think I’d have rather been tits up than verbally confirming that your cock was in my mouth to a detective?”

He took hold of the sledgehammer again and readied it. “We’re just getting started,” he said before bringing the hammer down coldheartedly. He repeated the motion countless times, to the point of exhaustion. Until everything below Levi’s knees had been turned to a slippery pulp.

It was all still connected by the crushed bone and smidgen of flesh—two dripping, awkwardly-shaped sheets of pulverized humanity. After the first few blows, the screams started to dwindle just before Levi finally passed out from the pain.

Oliver had thought something like this might happen. He didn’t aim to make it that easy on him. He’d made a quick

stopover at the local Sport's Authority just in case things got a little too extreme. He reached back into the closet and removed a yellow box of extra strength smelling salts.

He'd seen the football players on TV using them when they got their bell rung on the field. When sniffed, allegedly, they stimulated or aroused the senses. Normally, one would be enough for a two-hundred-and-twenty-pound linebacker, but Oliver left nothing to chance these days. He sat behind him on the bed he was slumped up against and crushed five at once. He cupped his hand over Levi's nose and mouth and pulled back snugly.

Levi came to after a handful of huffs, his reaction was stronger than Oliver had anticipated. He thrashed about, with his sense of feeling greatly enhanced; the throbbing anguish blasting through his nervous system was now unbearable. He swung his fists upward and caught Oliver on the side of the head, sending him tumbling off the mattress.

Levi alertly scrambled toward the dresser with his stubby mess of extremities dragging behind him. He pulled at the drawer handles, trying to use them as a means to climb to the dresser and reach the Uzi. It was so close, he could taste it... the taste of perseverance, the taste of vengeance, the taste of cold steel?

During his ascension, Levi had no idea that Oliver had already regained his footing as well as the gore-clad sledgehammer. He swung it with enough reserve and control to ensure the blow didn't kill him; he wasn't getting off that quick. The flat end landed on the lower point of his jaw, breaking it open and sending Levi flying backward into the puddle of himself. He laid on his back with a crooked grimace forced upon him, still conscious but barely.

"No more fists for you, I guess." Oliver set the long hammer down once again and reclaimed the shears. He effortlessly cut three fingers off of each of Levi's hands, only leaving the thumbs and the middle fingers. He watched Levi closely; he didn't move a muscle as each digit was separated from him.

Oliver surmised that he would need some grip if he was to complete the task he still had in mind for him, but it was clear too much grip could create risk. After his happy compromise, he knew that he would need to get it rolling soon, before Levi expired.

He pulled his demolished frame toward the bed and left him in a kneeling position hanging over it, his face about a foot away from Lydia's soured snatch. Improvising, he grabbed a couple of fingers from the floor and his handheld blowtorch from the closet and laid down at the foot of the bed beside them.

"Mmmmmhhhhh! Mmmhhhhh!" Lydia tried to offer her pleas to Oliver but he'd already placed a generous amount of duct tape over his dead wife's mouth. He didn't want to hear it tonight. She was the one that suggested he be a man and go to war. Now he was, whether she liked it or not.

"Shut up, bitch," he said, crushing another few smelling salts with his fingers. He tossed them near Levi's ghastly gaping mandible. Oliver didn't need the reaction to be as strong as last time, he simply wanted his attention.

As Levi's eyes appeared to regain their function, the picture came into focus. Oliver was sprawled out in front of him while coasting the blue flame of the blowtorch and evenly toasting her labia, clitoris, and vulva. The squirming larvae weaving in and out of her necrotic feminine essence appeared irritated. They wormed around her hole-riddled skin like tiny fat snakes in swiss cheese. They popped and melted, some falling down onto the soiled bed sheet to flail in woe. Her cunt looked like a living, pulsating extra cheese pizza the way the insects were speckled within her.

Levi watched as Oliver stuck the tip of the flame deep into her cavity, loosening the stiffness a bit and taking some pleasure in violating her with the blowtorch. The salts under Levi had cleared his sinus and now the smell of dead month-old tilapia, burnt pubes, and sizzling cervix encompassed the bedroom. The inescapable perfume of massacre and

repercussion was more potent than the worst prison aroma that Levi could recall. What was transpiring before him was more heinous than the sum of all his worst days inside.

Levi knew he was right where Oliver wanted, right where he was only a short time ago. It must have felt wonderful to the crazed fool, he thought, remembering how wonderful it was for him. The control, dealing out the hurt, the absolute power. The concept of their juxtaposition and the foulness of the aroma finally triggered him.

His upchuck looked strange exiting the busted jaw. Hot vomit rapidly covered Levi's bleeding hands but he was too out of order to care. He couldn't stop himself; the smell was overwhelming and the salts had only amplified it. He knew Oliver was getting exactly what he'd dreamed.

Oliver had applied a wad of Vicks Vapor Rub under his own nose. In his research, he'd found that it helped medical personnel perform autopsies without having to endure the harshness of the scent. Since he wasn't sure how he'd react, he wanted to prepare. He was getting the jump on everything this time around. While it did mask it slightly, the overall stench could still be detected. He put one of Levi's detached fingers under his nose and wiped it off. He was starting to like the smell...

"Okay, this is where I need you to listen up," he chuckled, not intending to say that while staring at the side of his head that was missing an ear. "You can hear me, right?" Oliver pointed the blowtorch at his forehead. "Answer me, or I'll melt your fucking eyeballs next."

Levi's unhinged jaw quivered in the wet patch of vomit as if he attempted to utilize it for speech. The gurgling noise seemed like confirmation but he couldn't be sure.

Oliver knew words weren't going to be possible, "Just nod your head if you understand."

Levi bobbed his head as the tear storm started up at full speed again.

“Okay, stud, you ready for some real fun now? I know you’re a big, strong fella that knows how to please a woman. You two seemed to have so much chemistry with each other that I thought, what the hell, let’s make it happen one more time.”

He took the pair of detached digits and began to finger Lydia in an almost romantic sort of way. It was as if he wanted to show the mash of mortality that was Levi how fun it could be.

He pushed them in and out of the decaying, charred entrance and tickled what was left of her charcoaled hood. It looked bizarre, not only because the fingers weren’t connected to a hand but also because they were two index fingers pinned beside each other. Some of her had gotten so hot from the torching that she’d melted and started gushing downward all over Levi’s meat sticks.

“Oh, look, she’s getting nice and wet for you again. Look at what your big manly elements are doing to her again. You like that?” he asked Levi as he took his fingers covered with his wife’s melted remains and slathered the reaping over Levi’s exposed tongue.

“You like how she tastes, don’t you?” He watched a maggot squirm about amongst the rancid slobber that was left on his tastebuds.

“Alright, I got her warmed up for you,” Oliver looked at Levi’s fingers still in his hand, “I mean, well, we got her warmed up now, but the rest is up to you, stud.” Oliver shimmied off the side of the bed and back to his tool bag. He extracted a brown paper bag, which upon opening, revealed a variety of cock ring sizes.

“With all the chaos of our first meeting, I didn’t quite register your size, so I went with the tool set approach.”

He cut the jeans off of Levi using a box cutter that he pulled out from his stash. With him now nude, he used all his might to propel him up onto the bed. His devastated mouth landed

atop the melting pot between Lydia's legs. His tongue could feel the bugs fidgeting against his pallet until Oliver pushed him on his side. It took him a couple of tries to find the right size cock ring before he got it synched in properly.

Unfortunately, Levi was limp as a yo-yo but it was of little issue, again Oliver was prepared. He retrieved the already-filled syringe from his bag and returned to his seat.

"I told you I was getting creative here, right?" Levi moaned, still wishing he was dead already.

"I wanted this day to be perfect for the two of you, so perfect that I even tested it myself to make sure we wouldn't have a snafu. I mean, I didn't ingest it in the same manner that you will, but you get the idea. Believe it or not, it's a lot of over-the-counter stuff mostly and maybe a few other things that require a prescription. Regardless, let me tell you, I railed the shit out of her for hours. It worked like a charm! I mean, I wasn't as good as you or anything, stud, but you know, for an undesirable like me, I thought it was pretty good. I hope you don't mind sloppy seconds." A sinister laugh escaped him; he was almost completely unglued.

"This stuff worked so good, it made me wonder if I got into the wrong business. Maybe if I had dialed up a needle of this magic a few years ago, I'd be rich and Lydia wouldn't have been such a cunt for like a decade. But that's neither here nor there I suppose. What's important is that a stallion like you can get one more ride in before things wrap up." Oliver stabbed the night-crawler-shaped vein in his member and dumped the entire contents of the glass tube inside him.

His penis inflated like a balloon animal—it looked like a cooking sausage on the grill that's contents were about to burst through the skin. He set the needle down and broke up another handful of the salts. Oliver dragged his dying body atop Lydia's and helped align Levi's jam-packed member with Lydia's sour gates. Oliver clamped Levi's floppy jaw to the roof of his mouth and held it in place where it should have

been. Then he set his salty hands upon him once again, ready to reopen his senses.

“C’mon, stud, I promise it can still get worse unless you take care of business for me. I’ll cut off an inch every hour. I’ll make sure you stay alive for days, maybe weeks. You’re almost at the finish line, but if you fuck up now, we’re gonna have to start the whole race all over again.”

Levi understood what he was saying full and well and the smelling salts were giving him a surge. It wasn’t to the tier of physicality that he was capable of almost escaping with, but it was enough to thrust his hips and try to work his way inside her.

Lydia’s cunt was still warm and extra runny from the torching. It wasn’t without purpose though, the liquified flesh served him well as a lubrication. As his hardened helmet pushed inside her, it was as if her insides were still alive; the massive army comprised of thousands of tiny maggots massaged his manhood in sickening fashion.

As Oliver felt his rhythm, he stepped off and let the man perform but noticed his enthusiasm was dying. Levi looked like a dog taking a shit outside in the rain while everyone was watching him. Oliver positioned himself behind him and put his boot to his ass, causing him to sink deeper into Lydia than he’d ever been before.

Suddenly, Levi felt his shaft run hot with discomfort. It was hard to tell from all the red, but as he pulled out and examined the head of his cock, he noticed it had been sliced into four sagging sections. “Booty trap,” Oliver mumbled as he retrieved the Uzi off the dresser and approached the befuddled criminal. He smacked him in the side of his gooey ear canal with the automatic and Levi landed on the carpet. He was in such a state of shock that any form of reaction was out of the question.

“Get up, bitch,” Oliver snapped. Levi looked up at him, elevated on the nubs of his knees with eyes that still begged for death. “Open up your mouth,” his jaw already looked like a

Slinky, Oliver quickly realized he'd already complied. "Now, I'm gonna let you taste something that you'd never get to taste without me... the taste of retribution."

Oliver pulled back the trigger and held it down. The shots rang out until he emptied the whole clip, annihilating the area that connected his head and torso. He steadied it as best he could, the power of the weapon made it look like he was convulsing. Once the bridge of flesh broke down, he just watched the holes fill up his body.

A part of him wished he could've reloaded but he knew the ammunition for the Uzi was limited. He needed to be somewhat conservative, there were other people that needed to die still—some with hi-tech artillery of their own.

Oliver took one final look at his handiwork and digested the potential that had previously gone untapped. The pure mayhem and carnage he'd unleashed pointed to a malicious swing in his personality. He wasn't the man that everyone thought he was and maybe, more importantly, he wasn't the man that he thought he was. He wasn't yellow.

PARLOR OF PERVERSION



Officer Thomas stepped in from the obscurity and unforgiving elements that a late night in the city often produced. He stood in his soggy plainclothes in the dim entryway of Hoffman's Funeral Home. The rain was pouring even harder outside than the days past. It had become exhausting in some ways, having gone on nearly without fail for over a month.

The morbid establishment's professionally-dressed owner, Donald Hoffman, closed the door behind him and turned to greet Officer Thomas. Gray hair topped his bony face and both his expression and frame were overly defined. He appeared malnourished; it was as if he'd grown to look like the stiff he'd constantly been inundated with. You're only as good as the company you keep.

"So, what's the tally?" Hoffman asked, rubbing his grubby palms together.

"I've got three more for you, two niggers and a gook. I had my undercover informant make sure that the families got wind

of the discount you'd be willing to provide. Retards took the bait, as usual," Officer Thomas snickered.

"Excellent, that's seven in a week... I'm gonna have to do two-a-days if we maintain this pace. You keep this up and the two of us are gonna be rich, my friend."

"Only thing better than taking the money from their grieving loved ones is actually putting the bullets in their heads. Poor fools can't refuse your low-income and minority discounts."

"I have a feeling they might if they knew who was killing them."

The unlikely duo shared a humorous moment. The insensitivity that was part of each of their occupations had formed common ground between them. Both roles required a certain tendency for sociopathic behavior. Their blasphemous bond was sealed in by the piping hot blood of the city's impoverished.

The penniless people whose murder cases went cold without a peep from society outside of the immediate family members of the departed. They had no idea that the lives of their loved ones were part of a cold-blooded and compartmentalized conspiracy. A partnership built on perversion.

"It's a damn shame when I have to keep a non-service weapon with me at all times to keep the streets clean." Officer Thomas liked to try to make himself and Donald believe that the marathon of serial killing they were fostering was some kind of pilgrimage toward a more peaceful existence.

Donald didn't acknowledge his comment and cut to the business portion, "Just wait in the parlor and give me about fifteen minutes. I've gotta go down the street and hit the ATM. I didn't know you were coming tonight, but more business is always a good thing." He brandished a wicked smile, "There are some magazines on the table in there with pictures of pretty people in them to keep you busy."

Officer Thomas wandered over to one of the cushy chairs that was typically reserved for seating the family of the deceased during service. “Alright, just make it quick, I’ve got a date with a hooker and an 8-ball.”

Donald grabbed his trench coat and exited into the cloudburst. Officer Thomas flipped through a few pages of the sleazy materials suggested to him. The plastic surgery, scandal and tasteless paparazzi images only held his attention for a few minutes. He set the magazine down and took notice of the two closed caskets at the front of the room. One was already in position to be displayed, the other seemed en route to elsewhere, tucked against the side wall.

Curiosity always got the best of Officer Thomas, so without hesitation, he lifted the lid of the coffin sitting front and center. The death box contained a young Hispanic girl who couldn’t have been a day over fifteen.

While Donald had done a marvelous job of cosmetically masking the violence committed against her, you could still see that her neck had been cut to the spine bone. Her wrecked surface was a jigsaw puzzle of predicaments that didn’t come together neatly. The half-dozen or so stab wounds about her cheeks and forehead were deep and had everlastingly altered her outline. No matter how much make-up and spray paint Donald could have put on the girl, she’d still look monstrous.

To him, it was obvious why the young girl would have a closed casket, and if that was the case, they wouldn’t miss her bracelet. After all, he’d grown fond of it during the weeks he’d spent abusing her. She was good at keeping quiet but had a real smart mouth on her. He didn’t mean to go as far as he did, he just wanted to teach her a lesson about talking back but things had clearly gotten out of hand. The damage he’d done was irreparable, and he had been left with no other choice but to finish the job.

He was a tad grief-stricken, not because she was dead but because her body would be placed underground where he could no longer have at it. Either way, the jewelry would make

a nice memento, something that he could slide around his own wrist while he stroked himself or force the next child that he targeted to wear.

Officer Thomas slipped his hand into the box and grabbed hold of the sparkling jewelry excitedly, but the armlet didn't seem to want to come free. It was almost like she knew he was trying to take it from her. He began to tear at it more destructively until he finally had it in his clutches. He examined it carefully in the light, "Cheap shit, but either way, you won't be missing it, right, sweetie?"

He leaned into the mutilated child's taut frame and kissed her waxy lips. His tongue slathered about her gridlocked orifice while his hands rubbed against her clothed bosoms. As he groped her eagerly, he tasted the cosmetics and unnatural—almost toxic—flavor she omitted. The unusual zests thrilled him as did the sight of the stone-cold stare trapped on her grotesquely marred face.

Officer Thomas was breathing hard as he finally regained control, recognizing he had to stop. He was a realist; Donald would be back soon, there simply wasn't enough time for him to rip one off in the interim. He had a warm whore waiting by his bedside anyhow, there was no need to blow his load early.

He fluffed her clothing back up, closed the lid, and turned away crudely while slipping the morbid keepsake into his pants. The other coffin that looked to be in transit came into his sights. He wondered if a thorough inspection might supply him with some additional ill-gotten gains.

Upon prying the next squeaky cover open, he was confronted with the sight of a plump balding man that he was already quite well acquainted with—the pushover, Oliver Fitch. He didn't seem surprised that the soft sucker with the marshmallow vertebrae had finally succumbed to his pathetic cowardice.

After overhearing Detective Treadwell detail his many miseries, it seemed logical that he might have wanted out. He sure wouldn't be offering him any extra protection, since it

was Officer Thomas's business partners that maimed him. He only took a smidgen of regret in the misfortune that he wasn't able to make a commission off of Oliver's expiration. His corpse had somehow found its way there by other means...

As Oliver laid static in the casket, the immoral touch of Officer Thomas found him. Up to that point, his method acting had been flawless but he wasn't that proficient at holding his breath. In addition, his legs were getting restless and he had a nagging itch on his nose. The layers of face powdering he'd applied to himself for added authenticity might have had something to do with it.

Having snuck inside just prior to Officer Thomas's arrival, he'd been in the box for close to forty minutes. He was dressed like you would for your own funeral; in his finest (and only) suit, patchy hair slicked back, and a seldom donned golden watch his father had given to him before passing away.

Luckily for Oliver, Officer Thomas wasn't queer, which meant he could avoid being molested since his attention was solely targeted on stealing from him. Oliver had been watching his sad gimmick for days now; murder, collect, then steal from those he murdered.

They were both double-dipping in the most despicable fashion. Officer Thomas was visiting the funeral parlor more than the fuckin' grocery store. His ritual was like clockwork; show up at Hoffman's intentionally unexpectedly, shoot the shit with ol' Donnie, and when the wrinkly bastard went to grab the cash, he'd pillage from the various corpses he was responsible for putting there in the first place.

Officer Thomas's gaze paused as it caught the glimmer of the shiny gold Bulova timer wrapped around his wrist. "Oliver, who would have thought an out-of-style nerd like you had such taste in timepieces? I'm shocked, I mean, it ain't a fuckin' Rolex but not bad. Probably just too scared to wear it."

He laughed to himself and then grabbed at the loot and slid it around Oliver's hand. As he sloppily yanked it out of the box, he noticed a white string and metal pin had come along with it.

It took only a second for it to click—something was different about this theft. *Wait a second... is Oliver's hand warm?* he thought. Before he could finish dissecting what the hell was going on, it was already too late, the dead had risen to amend the gross imbalance of karma.

Oliver's eyes fluttered open as he pulled the grenade out from its hidden location under his thigh. He catapulted up and clamped his hand around both Officer Thomas's pants and boxer-briefs. He pulled them forward and dropped the stolen military device into his junk hanger with haste, wielding an ear-to-ear grin.

"Time's up, tough guy," Oliver hollered as he pushed Officer Thomas backward and laid back down, pulling the coffin lid shut.

The violence of the detonation felt seismic and caused his hiding spot to plummet off the wheeled transference table and onto the wine-red carpet. Oliver was stunned by the force momentarily but shook it off and smashed his way out of the saturnine encasement.

As he started to climb out, he noticed a few pieces of debris had been impaled into the cover. *Good thing I got it down quick enough, could have been my face,* he thought to himself, feeling relief. His concern wasn't that it would have killed him, it was only that dying would have stopped him from killing the rest of them.

Oliver wasn't even sure if the thing was going to work, who knew how long Alejandro had the hot explosives. The thing could have been from Vietnam for all he knew. And it wasn't like you could fire a warning shot with them. He'd hidden the sawed-off around his covered ankles as a backup plan if the grenade was a dud, thankfully, it hadn't come to that. He felt

lucky to have encountered Alejandro, who had access to some fun toys.

He retrieved the double-barrel from the boot of the casket and let out a pair of shots at each of the hysterical smoke detectors. Once the room had quieted, he reloaded and strutted over toward the fresh running amputations of Officer Thomas.

There was a crater in the floor from the blast and the blackened flooring was still smoking where one of his legs had landed. It looked like it'd been chewed on for a month by a pack of Dobermans, then left to roast in an oven. The second was still attached but just barely, his femur and shin were both cracked and visibly protruding from his skin. Most of the flesh was pulled off like a flock of barbarians having their way with a partially eaten chicken. The meat between his legs was a muddle of nasty, like his thighs and junk had been dipped into a meat grinder and puked back out over what was left of his bones.

Officer Thomas was too stunned to scream. He looked up at the disturbed little man creeping toward him with the regularity of a morning jog. He wondered how that same insignificant drudge had put an end to his walks forever in both the literal and metaphorical sense; he'd turned his legs to pudding.

Oliver was so pitiful; how could it be? The last time he'd encountered him, he was face-down in a puddle, and the time prior, he'd just finished being beaten and raped by the deviants of the streets. But as Oliver cocked the hammer back, one thing was sure as shit now, it was gonna be him dealing out the hurt for the rest of the ride.

“You know, I'm glad you're not dead yet, we have a couple of things to button up still. Watching you the past few days, I mean, it doesn't take a genius to figure that you're a child fucker. And I know that you used the tapes you made yourself to put Ramon away.”

The gravity of the situation was sinking in for Officer Thomas, what were potentially his final minutes on earth had

begun ticking away. He looked down at his destroyed body, and as a variety of terrors ravaged his emotions, he yelled, “I can get Ramon out! I can get him back out! I-I fuckin’ swear to you!”

“Officer...” Oliver interrupted, waiting for him to stop stumbling over his dubious promises.

“I can make it happen! He will be a free man again! Like nothing ever happened!”

“Officer Thomas...”

“You believe me, you’ve seen the pull I have!”

“It’s over. None of that matters anymore. The only thing that’s certain is that you’re gonna die. But you still have a choice to make.”

Officer Thomas’s mangled leg squirmed about, it appeared to Oliver that he was trying to stand on phantom limbs. His lower remnants looked like they’d been built from a B-movie, turning almost mechanically. With the heel of his boot, he stepped on the jumble of marbled nub where his baby-raping phallus was once housed. As Officer Thomas cried out, Oliver let off the two shells in the sawed-off at his knee joint, separating the bone that was only hanging on by a thread.

“Do I have your attention now?!” Oliver’s tone became more unhinged as he pulled another pair of shells from his interior breast pocket.

“Yeeeeesssssss!”

“Good, you’ve been able to talk a whole lot during our interactions, exclusively almost, I did about ninety-nine percent of the listening I’d say. But today, it’s time for you to listen for once, okay?”

Officer Thomas nodded his head as death chills snaked through his twitching frame.

“The way I see it, you have two choices left. Now I’m not particularly religious myself, for me, if there’s a hell, I know it can’t be much worse than this place, yet still, there’s a part of

me that wonders... but if you have just a skid-mark of belief in the afterlife, you've got hard times ahead of you."

Oliver once again erected the sawed-off as he completed the restock. "Where you're going, might ensure that some of the same unspeakable acts of perversion you're responsible for are carried out on you ten-fold. And you know, eternity's a long time. So, in your dwindling moments, you can choose to add to that load of bloody, shit-stained karma that you've accumulated, and potentially be punished even more severely, or you can come clean. Tell me how high up it goes, give me a name. Tell me who the top dog is so I can put him down. Who knows, maybe you will be shown mercy in the next life because I, sure as the day is long and dreadful, can't show you any in this one."

The metal barrels felt cold as they pressed against Officer Thomas's temple. He knew Oliver was right. He was at the end of the road, and if for nothing else than his own selfish reasons, he needed to try and make a good first impression, wherever he was going. He'd never took much time to think about what came after. He was too consumed with his own excess and getting his rocks off via adolescent street meat. For the first time, there were no more distractions and he felt the debilitating weight of uncertainty.

The sociopathic blinders had lifted as he saw an array of hell flash through his mind. It wasn't the hell he pondered he'd be going to, it was the hell he'd paid forward to his fellow humans. His eyes began to tear up and his chest began to thud. Every despicable act, all his unspeakable outrages were with him at once.

All the girls with innocence in their eyes that he'd allowed to escape. The screams of the overdosing fiends that had withered away on his watch. Every gory gunshot wound and beat down that he had been responsible for. Every piece of false evidence planted on a perp, and every payoff and lie. And every average poor sap like Oliver who was just trying to get by that he'd neglected or extorted. There was an army within him.

“Time’s up, what’s it gonna be, hotshot?”

“It goes... all the way up,” Officer Thomas mumbled, life starting to escape him as the crimson rolled down his chin.

“Speak up, you sound about how you look right now.”

“Mooney, it goes up to Captain Mooney. Just... look at... him. Just... don’t kill me, please,” Officer Thomas coughed up more of the soupy red all over his bleeding torso.

Oliver wasn’t surprised that the captain was involved, there had been rumors swirling about Robert Mooney’s vices for as long as he could remember. He cocked the hammer back again and dug the steel deep into his temple, watching while Officer Thomas shut his watery eyes.

He removed a slice of crumbled paper from his pants and opened it up. “Open your fuckin’ eyes,” Oliver commanded.

As more watery depression seeped out, his glossy eyes showed themselves again. He locked onto the distorted parchment that showed Ramon’s solemn expression and the slew of fabricated charges he’d cooked up beneath.

“Get a good look at him and just remember this is why... I’ll see you around.”

All around is exactly where the chunks of him flew. As Oliver pulled the trigger, the top of his head came off, exposing the mushy control center of selfishness inside of Officer Thomas’s cranium. His eyelids remained open while the hearty wave of what was his egocentric intelligence splattered against a wall and a box of tissues. Tissues that the families of his victims would no longer release their headache and grief into moving forward.

He moved on from the warm mess, quickly adding another round to replace the one he’d turned Office Thomas off with. He knew old man Hoffman would be back any minute. He was just as upset with him as he was with the rest.

Hoffman was an integral cog in the sinister machine; he manufactured the darkness that was constantly circulating all

around him. His baleful contributions left him owed a cruel demise just as the rest. Oliver reached into the foot of the casket and retrieved one more item before he turned the lights out in the lobby.

When Donald pulled into the front parking lot, he wasn't alarmed that the lights were off, he was just aggravated. "Fucking breakers again," he muttered, chastising an all too common occurrence in a failing building that was erected in the 50s. There had certainly been some upgrades since then but the place was far from modernized.

Donald turned his key and closed the door behind him softly, "Logan, goddamn breaker must have gone again."

Oliver flipped the light switch back on, causing Donald, in his state of confusion, to whip around. He only saw the elongated length of a stainless-steel machete reflect the amber lighting a moment before it slashed into his abdomen. The sadistically sharp knife-edge shredded his overworn undertaker's uniform and created an opening that looked surgical. A flood of rose drippings and contents of a gastrointestinal nature raced out of him with the promptness of a fire drill.

As old man Hoffman felt his insides vacating, he dropped the keys in one hand but maintained his grip of the envelope full of cash in the other. Even on death's doorstep, he couldn't let go of his greed. As he pressed his hands and forearms to his belly, he was able to postpone a helping of his entrails from departing, but Oliver followed up with another strike. The new laceration cut through his thumb and index finger while splitting the envelope and its contents down the middle.

A warped grin manifested above Oliver's chin as Donald fell to the ground, spilling out of himself. He watched the divided green currency mix in with his guts. "You can't take it witcha, old man," Oliver laughed.

He continued to watch the pitiful bastard writhe in agony but still, somehow, fuel the drive to scramble for money that would be useless to him in a few moments. It must have just been his instincts...

“Please stop! Oh, Jesus, you’re killing me, my... my stomach. Who are you? I don’t even know you, sir, please, why on Earth are you doing this?!”

“I’m the man that’s here to put an end to your side hustle. I’m the guy that probably would’ve just ended up in one of your bargain bin boxes like the rest of your clients. But, instead, I decided to come and see you before you saw me.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, mister, I swear to you! I swear to God, on my mother’s grave, I’m...” he coughed up a wad of drool and thick blood back into the pool of innards he was trying to contain still, “I’m innocent!”

“This is what you did to them,” Oliver raised the machete to the roof, “you cut them all up, long before they should have been. That’s all you do is cut people open. Let’s see how you like it.”

He was tired of the lies; old man Hoffman’s words were as hollow as his torso. Oliver aimed to discontinue his speech altogether as the blade came down, crashing into his voice box. Donald grabbed onto the blade, money still in hand, trying to protect it. As he gurgled deeper, Oliver put all of his body weight and fat into the pressure. He thrust down like setting a shovel in dirt.

The pressure pushed the metal through his neck and eliminated any connecting bone or tissue. As his head tumbled sideways, sprouting out the remainder of his fluids, his body started to slump. The old man’s hacked-up hands finally seemed to loosen their grip on the blade but Hoffman never loosened his hold on what remained of the bloody Benjamins and envelope.

THE LAST COINCIDENCE



Evelyn sat in her hairdresser's chair as Franco finished up taking a snip here and there. He met the eyes of his best tipper through the mirror in front of them, "It must feel a little strange now that you're out of the city though, do you miss it at all?"

"Ha, yeah right. Do I miss the homeless bums and hookers? The lung-clogging smog and constant threat of violence? What kind of a question is that?"

"Oh, stop it, there's good things here too. I bet the Chinese food and shopping out there sucks," Franco replied with a touch of femininity to his tone.

"I'm happy to take a drive however long I need to for that, I'd rather be isolated and have my space at this point."

"Yeah, I guess you still work here so you're gonna get your fill of it."

"I've had my fill already, ten years of service to these heathens, the next step is transferring out altogether. I mean, you should see the animals that come into the bank these days,

three inches of bulletproof glass still isn't enough to make me feel safe anymore. Nope, I put in my time. Once something opens up in the backwoods, it's adios, I'll be gone for good."

"Sounds like you're getting old to me."

"Franco! How dare you!"

"Relax, I said getting old, not looking old, that's a big difference." Franco removed her apron and shook off the remaining trimmed locks that clung to the material.

"Well, that's good because Mark is coming over tonight. I need to keep my young one coming back for more. I can't have him thinking I'm some dried-up hag like you do."

Franco wondered why he had even made the comment, he knew she had fragile confidence and right before she tipped him. *Freaking idiot*, he thought, laying the black apron over the chair. He watched her pry open her purse carefully before contriving a look of confusion.

"Oh, it seems I only brought enough cash for the haircut, silly me, my mind must be slipping in my old age I suppose."

Franco rolled his eyes, "We take cards too, Evelyn."

He threw it out there in desperation and she threw it right back, "Oh, Lord, it looks like I've forgotten my cards too!" She tossed the exact amount of required money for the trim onto his chair and walked out.

Evelyn had just gotten out of the shower and slipped into something more comfortable before donning her lavender silk robe. Her hair was darker when wet but still fiery, and somehow, her freckles were more noticeable. She looked outside through the wall of glass window in the living room and out into the wet shadow that engulfed the woods.

She took comfort and relaxation in the peace that nature brought to her despite much of its down payment being manufactured at the expense and hardship of her less fortunate clients. It didn't matter to her though, in her eyes, they were

marked for failure anyway. What did it matter if she lost some paperwork or intentionally botched a payment here or there to speed up the process? In her proud mind, it was going to happen anyway—end of story.

She set five hearty logs inside the fireplace and a mass of newspaper and cardboard to get it going. She lit the fire and settled back into her papasan chair with a glass of wine. The house still felt new but everything was finally unpacked and in place. She set her glass on the table beside her and reached for the newspaper.

She opened up the wide sheet of ink and her eyes immediately leapt to the horrible headlines from the city. The second one down particularly grabbed her attention: ‘Morbid Massacre: Off-Duty Officer & Undertaker Found Slain in Horrific Fashion.’

While the names of the deceased hadn’t been released yet, some of the grisly details were. Her jaw dropped as she read on aghast by the particulars of the strange crime. Explosions, mutilation, guns, knives, and of course, money were all mentioned.

“This is exactly why I left,” she said, revalidating her decision. Just as she finished patting herself on the back, the doorbell rang. “Shit! Is Mark here early?!” She threw the paper down on the coffee table and ran to the mirror beside the bar.

“Just a minute!” she yelled, removing a cylinder of lipstick from the drawer on the small desk within arm’s reach. She applied a luscious layer of the deep maroon, fixed her hair as best she could, and then headed for the door.

She pulled the knob elatedly until she saw what was on the other side of it—Oliver Fitch’s slimy scalp. His Salvation Army attire and insufferable eyes bombarded her. He held a tire iron with one hand and patted it into the other with a menacing spirit infecting him. Unease gripped her, she didn’t know what else to say but his name, “Oliver?”

“Oh, Evelyn, you live here? That’s crazy, wow, what a coincidence. Believe it or not, I was actually out here looking at a few houses. You know, after what happened and all, I have to start getting ready for my next move. But wouldn’t you know it, my car broke down about a mile back. I didn’t realize out here just how much space there is between properties.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, car trouble is never fun, especially in the rain,” she stammered, still not sure whether she believed him or not. She knew his accounts were in rough shape but it’s possible his wife had an insurance policy that paid out. But it was awfully late in the day to be looking at houses. His presence felt more than fishy to her.

“Only thing about living out in an area like this is, it might take forever to get help. You know, like if you had an emergency or something? It could put you in a real pickle I suppose.”

Evelyn’s heart began to pound furiously, she didn’t believe he would’ve driven nearly an hour to serve up a thinly veiled threat. His physical mannerisms made his intent seem unpredictable and precarious. She prayed she was reading him wrong but her gut said otherwise.

“Anyway, you mind if I come inside and use the phone for a moment? I’m sorry to impose but I’m in a real bind as you can see.”

“I have a cordless, actually, I’ll go ahead and bring it over for you.”

“But it’s raining, Evelyn,” a flash of lightning cracked behind Oliver’s plump undesirable frame, “I don’t want to get your phone all wet out here. What am I not good enough to come inside your house or something?”

“No, it’s nothing like that, I just thought it’d be easier for you t—”

He responded by bursting through the entry and sending her toppling backward. He slammed the door behind him and locked it. Just as Evelyn gained her footing, she felt and heard

the CRACK from the curve of the rusty metal landing in her eye socket. Her orbital bone shattered and the scrapes of the crude and unforgiving tool ripped into her pupil. Blood gushed as she fell backwards, disoriented but not so disoriented that she couldn't understand his chilling words.

“I helped buy this fuckin’ house and you’re not even going to invite me inside, bitch? Don’t forget that it was your little payouts from facilitating my failure and the failure of all the others like me that created your shiny precious paradise! You thought you could escape scot-free, you thought you could avoid the consequences, but that’s not the case. The consequences have arrived and I promise you they aren’t gonna be easy to swallow.” Oliver landed an additional blow on the side of her skull that short-circuited her consciousness before grabbing her limp body by the wrist and dragging her into the living room.

Evelyn awoke with her arms, legs, and feet bound by a gritty twine that was beginning to slice into her surface. She was immobilized and ass-up, bent over her thousand-dollar coffee table observing the raging fire before her. It was clear that the flames had been accelerated as the firepit could barely contain them any longer.

Aside from the lone bronze fire poker that sat baking in the scorching coals, the daunting flames were all she could see. Blood descended over the layers of duct tape against her mouth before falling to pool on the beige rug below the other side of the coffee table.

Oliver squatted down in front of her, holding open the newspaper that entailed his handiwork on a chunk of the cover. “You reading up on me?” he asked taking his eye off the write-up to connect with her. She murmured frantically but he couldn’t understand a word of it and returned his attention back to the article.

“Wow, I can’t believe it, you know I was never really too big on the spotlight. I just wanted to lay low, lead a humble

life is all. It's scum like you that pushed it to this. You're all the same, all cutting corners no matter who you're cutting out in the process. You think it was smart to cut me out now? What good is your little mansion now?" Evelyn stared down at the saturated carpet below her bleeding face, praying he would just leave.

"Now look at me! I'm a fucking monster!"

When he screamed, he caught a glimpse of his image in the mirror beside the mantle. His chewed-up features looked sculpted by Beelzebub. "I'm a walking nightmare. But I have to be that, don't I? Because if I don't take a stand, then it'll never stop. Otherwise, there's no telling how many people you'd usher into destitution."

Oliver looked back toward the blaze and tossed the newspaper into it. "That right there ain't nothing. The reckoning has only just begun. This is what happens when you're permanently branded with a negative perception."

He started to pace around like a boomerang, "I'm insignificant. I'm scared. I'm fragile. I'm a fucking bug, right? Or at least that's how you all see me... but that's your mistake," Oliver explained, removing the red-hot poker from the fireplace. He pointed the glowing orangey tip near her ruined eye and the heat singed the hairs on her eyebrow as she carefully squirmed.

"What you and the rest of them see as my weakness is actually my advantage. Because just like you didn't see it coming, neither will they, and by the time it's all over, it'll be too late. That headline fading away in the fire won't be the last, I can assure you of that much."

Oliver walked around to her rear and lifted up her silk robe, exposing her panties. He stretched them out, away from her skin, and burned through the crotch, causing them to rip away in his grasp.

"So, just like you fucked me and everyone else that walked into that backwards bank of yours, I figure it's time for us to

do the fucking now.”

Her hairy pie had a mini afro of sorts veering off in many directions. The sizzling poker burned up a few hairs as it closed in on her, but just as he was about to begin penetration, the doorbell rang.

“Son of a bitch,” Oliver crooned, dissatisfied by the interruption. He set the poker back in the fire in an effort to sustain its temperature and looked at Evelyn, who now sprouted the faintest flicker of hope in her eyes. “Don’t worry, I’ll be right back, sweetie.”

Oliver speedily drew the curtains around the fireplace. Then he approached the door, quiet and cautious, thankful that the floor wasn’t old and creaky. As he looked through the peephole, he saw Mark Lumbarg, Evelyn’s trusty boy toy, dressed to impress holding a small bouquet of colorful flowers.

“Shit...” Oliver whispered. He had no idea who the fuck the guy was but he was built like a brick shithouse. His physique spawned a true cause for concern as his meat-headedness nearly split him at the seams. But more so than anything else, Oliver’s conscience was starting to gnaw at him. A benevolent voice inside had piped up but the darkness offered rebuttals.

Cherub Voice: We don’t know this kid, what is he twenty-four? He didn’t do anything to us...

Nasty Voice: But clearly, judging from the tulips, he’s here to see Evelyn... and her two lips... do we really think someone that’d be willing to bed her or even stand to be around her could be innocent?

Cherub Voice: Are we willing to kill a man based off an assumption? Is that who we’ve become?

Nasty Voice: Assumption or not, we’ve gone too far with Evelyn to do anything but finish. Even if he’s a fuckin’ altar boy, this putz has a case of ‘wrong place, wrong time’ written all over him. If he sees our face, we have to kill him, there’s no other way around it.

Cherub Voice: *Maybe if we just wait, he'll leave?*

Nasty Voice: *Maybe not. Maybe he calls the police on us? Maybe he stops us from getting to the rest of them? He must be sacrificed for the greater good, unless we think Angel Rodriguez should be free to roam the streets? What about Captain Mooney, or the devil himself, Damien Sanchez? Should they both get a pass too because of this musclebound asshole?*

Cherub Voice: *We might be able to still do what's needed here and escape if we just ignore him.*

Nasty Voice: *But why should we have to rush? Don't we want to take our time with her? Don't we deserve to take our time with her? Plus, we've seen guys like this before, he's a couple of cans short of a six-pack. He's gonna whine and scream and raise hell if he doesn't get the pussy he was promised. That's all a meathead Casanova like this fuckboy thinks about. We can't take a chance. We mustn't be derailed...*

Meathead Mark's fist was pounding on the door now, he'd moved on from the doorbell efforts as his aggression and testosterone began to ascend. He backed up and looked at the second story and cupped his hand around his mouth, "Evelyn! Is everything alright?"

Oliver knew that the nasty voice was right, the only way to pacify the situation would be to silence him. He ran back over to Evelyn and pulled a piece of the duct tape off the side of her mouth, "What's his fuckin' name, bitch?"

She was still clearly shattered by what was transpiring but remained fearful and compliant, "It's Mark, please, please don't hurt hi—" Oliver laid the tape back over her mouth then picked up the roll and did three more quick rotations for good measure.

He flipped on the TV, hoping to mask the noise, but to his chagrin, the volume had been maxed on the surround sound. A gangbang scene where one girl was getting DP'd and jerking

off two other men displayed on the screen. Her earsplitting screams rang out. “Fuck, she’s a damn pervert!” Oliver grumbled.

Outside, Mark could hear the sweet moans of satisfaction pouring out, “What the fuck is going on in there?!” He raced over to the windows, only to have his view inside obstructed by the curtains. He jogged back to the front door and resumed his primitive pounding, “Hey, are you with someone else in there?! I can hear everything!”

By the time he turned the volume down and flipped to the news, Mark was irate and raving about how she’d called him out there to rub his face in her infidelities. Oliver had no choice but to somehow deal with him immediately before things got any worse. He scrambled back to the door and opened it up, not really knowing what to say.

“Hey, you’re Mark, right?”

“Yeah, who the fuck are you, asshole?”

“Uh, I’m Oliver, the cable guy. Evelyn is in the bathroom, I’m just fixing a problem with her box, er-ah, her cable box that is...”

Mark grabbed him by the sides of his trench coat and quickly pinned him to the wall. “Yeah, sure, cable guy, I’ve heard that one before, smartass. You’re the fuckin’ cable guy and I’m Mickey Mouse.”

“I swear, man, I’m just here to fix a few wires, she was getting bad erection,” he didn’t know why he said it, maybe it was the porn on the television just moments earlier that had left him with dick on the brain. Either way, that was quite an untimely hiccup. “I mean her RECEPTION! She was getting bad reception is all!”

“Fuckin’ wise guy, huh!” He punched him in the gut and continued to question him but he wasn’t really looking for answers. “If you’re the cable guy, then why you dressed like a fuckin’ bum?! Where’s your truck and uniform and everything?” Oliver didn’t quite have an explanation cooked

up for a reasonable question like that and his hesitation didn't help his case.

“Yeah, that's what I thought, LIAR! I ain't no dummy, I heard you in here plowing my pussy! I'll teach you to move in on me!” His hammy tan knuckles popped Oliver right in the nose, exploding it. It didn't take much seeing how it still wasn't quite finished healing from the hospital job Angel and Levi had given him. The snot and deep hues shot out and his eyes watered; déjà vu.

“Where is she, fucktard?!”

He pulled Oliver by the shoulders of his coat and flung him into the side of the bar. His head smashed into the hardwood, breaking off a small portion and knocking him silly in the process. Mark lifted his dizzied frame off the floor, his head was split open like an 80s wrestler that just juiced and his footing was wobblier than a baby fawn taking its first steps.

“Evelyyyyyyyyyn!” he howled out, dropping in another one to Oliver's left eye. Mark elevated his knee into Oliver's groin, crushing his testicles against his pelvis. He loosened his grip and let Oliver slide down to the ground. He was too tired and abused to whimper and taken aback that any young man could be so emotional about such a mediocre-looking cougar.

“Evelyn, you betrayed me! I thought we had an exclusive thing!”

As he turned around, scanning his eyes, he finally found her; bent over, tied up, duct-taped, and without panties. He stormed over, seething with his meathead mania. He'd been set off, a clear-cut case of roid-rage fueling his irrational actions.

“Look at you, you make me sick! You... you fuckin' slut! You never let me tie you up, I didn't even know you were kinky like this! What is this some kind of rape roleplay? I would'a raped you! What the hell's wrong with you?!”

He noticed the tears and fright flourishing in her expression, then as he focused a bit more, he noticed the mass of blood

and the mangled half of her face. “What the fuck...” he said as she twisted her head toward him with hope in her eyes surging.

The idiot finally understands, he'll stop him now! she thought. Her jubilation was quickly extinguished when, through background chatter of the pair of newscasters, she heard a dreadful sound; the sound of a hammer cocking back.

Mark turned his attention to Oliver who'd hoisted his broken frame up against the bar. His damp trench coat had flapped open, revealing what he'd been concealing. His posture was still rickety while he used the homemade shoulder holster to elevate the sawed-off.

As the rash of lead leapt from his double-barrel, he staggered, but it didn't affect him enough to throw off his aim. The barrage splattered the majority of Mark from the neck up. Pieces and bits flew all over the rug as his newly headless corpse landed abruptly beside a highly distressed and emotionally deflated Evelyn.

Oliver stumbled over, misshapen and pained as ever, and held himself up near the couch. Despite his overwhelming deadness, he still sized him up one more time for good measure. As he fired the shotgun again, Oliver realized that he didn't feel so bad about killing the cocksucker anymore.

He seemed like a prick, which was exactly what he was aiming at the second time around. The lead tore through most of his manhood, turning his hotdog into a pile of sloppy meat scraps. Mark remained motionless and without reaction because he was already dead...

Oliver tossed the gun onto the couch and fell to the floor beside Evelyn. The crimson mask of violence he found himself wearing again derived an even more horrified expression from her. He was tired from his beating but not too tired to finish what he'd come to do. He slithered over to the fire poker that still held a shining carrot color at the tip and grabbed hold of it. A look of completeness graced his expression as he returned back to her.

“There might be a lack of conversation moving forward since my jaw hurts now. But I think I already said everything I needed to.”

Evelyn squealed like a pig as he forced his way into her rectum with the tip of the poker. It burned the entire circle of smelly tissue that surrounded it upon penetration. Her arms and legs flailed as Oliver inserted it deeper inside her, tangy tears mixed with bubbling blood and what he assumed were pleas for mercy.

He let it sit in the same spot for a few moments until the flesh was so scalded that it was stuck to the poker. Upon jarring it about, he triggered a new flood. Excrement began to flow freely out of the ruined yawning in a slippery liquid form.

The smell was atrocious but that didn't stop Oliver. He teetered back and forth like two children on a seesaw, tearing at the skin that had fused to the poker. The now gaping and unnatural opening looked like a bottomless chocolate cherry slide.

“Ugh, aren't you house-broken?” Oliver asked, examining the burst of revolting wet fecal matter that continued to eject.

“You're a real nasty lady putting me through this.” The sultry abominable odor of blistering feces suddenly smacked him harder than he could have imagined. The invasion of anal emissions into his nostrils nearly caused him to hurl up his insides but, at the last moment, he found his composure.

Another wave of the soft-serve, two-girls-one-cup special coursed out, spraying over the parts of his hands that were maneuvering the fire poker. He didn't mind it much though; he was a man hard at work. Once she appeared to have wrapped up her dirty business, Oliver angled the rod slightly upward and started to pull it out.

Upon exit, he'd scraped the roof of her cavern with the hot-tip and the sticky, charred inner-skin remained glued to the bronze. Once he finally ripped the piping-hot poker away from her anus, the rectal prolapse was in full effect. He took in the

sight of the still sizzling overcooked pink sock that extended out of her backside, looking like a carnal version of Steve Urkel's accordion.

Oliver's jaw hurt but he still wanted to speak to her, "This won't do, a beautiful lady such as yourself can't be walking around like this."

He stormed over to the butcher's block a short distance from the bar behind them and extracted a pair of poultry shears and the largest knife he could find. The shears worked better than he imagined they might with Levi, so Oliver gawked at them enthusiastically when he noticed she owned a pair. Seconds later, he reappeared behind her again with his eyes on the prize.

He unhinged the scissors and snipped clean through the elongated sphincter tunnel, landing the cut as close to her cheeks as possible. A new torrent of fluid exited her, raining all over the massive mound of bumpy diarrhea that had accumulated. In addition, her body sweat drained at the rate of a basketball player as a result of the trauma and torment she'd endured. It seemed like nearly every liquid under the sun had headed for her hills.

Oliver dropped the scissors into the puddle of horror and readied the knife. He crept up behind her slowly and grabbed a handful of her soaked hair. He pulled her head back and cut across her throat swiftly, running the steel from ear to ear.

As Evelyn continued to tremor and gag, Oliver dropped the blade on the carpet and rounded the coffee table. He decided to take a load off and plopped down in the love seat. He watched the evil woman gyrate a few final times as the blushing waterfalls flowed from each end of her. He didn't leave her side until every drop had spilled.

THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR



Jennacide opened the front doors to the desecrated apartment building and quietly slipped inside. She approached the elevator, taking in the various spray-painted profanities, scuttling vermin, and bodily relief left within the lobby. She used her elongated yellowed fingernails to call for the elevator. When the transportation box came to a halt, her spiked black heel landed into the stagnant space.

She poked the button labeled '13' and watched the reflective stainless metal door slowly creep shut. As the cell ascended to the unlucky floor, she smiled and suckled upon the syrupy teat of narcissism. Her self-adoration wasn't totally unwarranted, Jenna's reflection was unique; one that would instill a profound dread within even the most obscure and gothic members of society.

Her tangled platinum hair was nearly identical to the hue of her creepily clouded pupils. A pair of sparkling ebony studs had been punctured into both of her cheeks, flanking a nose ring hoop that was so thick and heavy, it would have made a weaker girl's head sag. Her caramel skin brought even more

pronunciation to her bizarre pale features, none more so than her finely filed teeth. The razor enamel was so spiky and ominous that it bordered on demonic. It was easily the most painful fraction of her persona to achieve.

She let her split tongue slither out through her smile as the elevator came to a stop. She removed a tiny key from between her breasts and inserted it into the lock beside the button for the thirteenth floor. When she twisted the curved metal inside the door, it began to pull back open again. It unveiled a black nothingness—the ominous shadows were all that stood ahead.

To the majority, an atmosphere of such heavy gloom might be depressing, but Jennacide felt at home when engulfed by the unknown. As cozy as the vibe was to her, she twisted the key a tick further knowing that she needed to activate the lighting. While illuminating the hidden level would help her navigate, she knew it would do little for the necrotic-scented floor's residents.

Upon entry, the vivid portrait of pestilence was unmistakable, but the disease of the suffering wasn't derived by random circumstance from germs or Mother Nature's will; it was a specifically targeted manmade infection. One that started as a deranged idea in Damien Sanchez's mind and went on to materialize on a secret floor within one of his many slumlord properties.

The first girl that faced Jenna had clearly been captive for some time. Like any of the inhabitants confined to Damien's Earthly version of bastardized purgatory, her eyes were absent. They'd been plucked from the hollows of her head and then substituted with a mirror-like material.

The razor-edged hexagon glass screwed into each hollowed crater helped to foster a state of emotionlessness and unflinching compliance. If any within the captive herd manipulated their hauntingly static expressions to display anything outside of pure obedience, the edge of the shrill glass would cut into the surrounding flesh.

Damien dispatched one of his minions to do weekly inspections on the populous and examine their faces. If any were caught with blood or healed cuts around their eyes, they'd get a single warning. If they continued their struggle to suppress their feelings, then they would be removed immediately and scarified in a ritualistic fashion. If his slaves were caught with broken or missing mirrors, they would achieve a similar fate.

While on most days the gushing circumference of the girl's eye voids would have landed her in hot water or worse, today, Jenna had a different agenda on tap. She walked past the ill-fated girl's curdling and gaunt shell. It was drained of all pigment and purpose as evidenced by the hopelessness ingrained in her posture. The imprisoned spoke no words unless they were spoken to first.

She continued down the stagnant hallway and took in the smells of mold, decay, and unwashed fermenting flesh. All of the doors on the entire floor were removed, there was no privacy or barriers. Each door Jennacide peered into held a new glimpse of archaic evil.

In the first room, a group of elderly women sat in a circle all connected by a vast quilt of skin. They sewed the slick sheets of mortal casing together chaotically while a strange barbaric man yanked new patches free from a collection of rotting cadavers. The silent ladies' fingertips were like blood-oozing pincushions as they continuously felt for the boundaries of the humanoid bedspread while stabbing themselves repeatedly with the needle tips.

With months of mindless practice already, it was difficult to tell if their wounds were genuine mistakes or the swelling premonition of self-destructive behavior. They didn't know what their purpose was, only that their master had requested their services.

Self-destructive or suicidal behavior wasn't uncommon on the thirteenth floor. Almost every time Jenna did a

walkthrough, a fresh stiff was found. They could be creative at times, and that evening was no different than any of the prior.

As she passed a wall that had been torn down, she gazed into the exposed bathroom of one of the apartments that was now visible from the hallway. A pregnant woman was hunched over the toilet bowl like she'd just finished a long night of drinking. Her head was submerged to such a depth that it had all but disappeared.

“Fuck!” Jenna barked.

Jennacide's eyes popped when she noticed the growth that left the dead woman's stomach grossly exaggerated. She stormed over to the limp frame and grabbed a fistful of her locks and pulled back.

As the woman's face was dragged out of the overflowing pit of urine and feces, it took a moment before Jenna could register the identity of the deceased. Once enough of the excrement slid off her cheeks, she finally let out an exhale of relief.

It wasn't whom the master had beckoned, it wasn't whom the master had planted his seed inside. Jenna let go of her head carelessly and watched it plop back into the putrid soup.

“That's a shitty way to go,” Jennacide chuckled heartlessly.

She continued down the corridor with a hint of additional urgency. The thought of not being able to bring the master what he'd specifically requested implanted a grave terror in her bowels. The other typical sights of the blinded bottling the blood of their peers and harvesting various drugs from the array of grow rooms on the floor didn't warrant her curiosity any longer.

As Jenna made her way to the end of the hall, there was one room with a large metal door. In fact, it was the only room on the entire floor with a door. The same key that she'd used on the elevator she once again produced to unlock the massive barrier.

As the steel squealed its way open, it revealed a handful of sickly children shackled to their beds with feeding tubes pushing a clumpy gray mush inside them and IVs dripping in additional nourishment. They moaned quietly like tired zombies.

They no longer knew why they made the unsettling noises, it just happened. There were a handful of other tubes that exited the children's veins and served to administer the youthful plasma from their body's over to the other side of the room.

Jenna's foggy eyes darted away from the feeble brigade and landed at the adjacent area where a decaying casket sat on cinderblocks, elevated a few feet off the rug. She approached the claustrophobic box and again used her magic key to unbolt the locking mechanism. Jenna extracted the plethora of crimson tubes that fed into the coffin, then pulled up on the lid.

As the casket's hood sprung open, it revealed a bizarre sight. A beautiful but withering woman laid inside, pruned to excess by the buckets of blood that she was being pickled in. There was such vast volume that it nearly caused the box to overflow. Her boney frame was skirted by two moats of immobile fetuses that looked to have drowned in the pool of hemoglobin.

Prior to being encased in her morbid holding space, her allure was so striking that it struck fear in the brashest men. Despite her clothing and identity being stripped and her eyes being replaced with reflections, her balance of innocence and sex appeal remained.

The torturous subhuman conditions that pinned her down had defiled her spirit. The chains that held her in position to protect her from herself weighed heavily on her optimism but there was still a twinkle. Still a minute speck of the cheerful person that she'd always been that could never fully be extinguished.

Jennacide looked down at her orbbed belly and slowly dragged her long nails over the top of it. “The master has called on you, you shall help him see today... you and the little one,” she whispered into her ear gingerly.

“Kill me,” the girl replied.

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THE WILTING WATERS



Jennacide pushed the disturbed girl toward the dark altar in her rusty wheelchair while Damien Sanchez stood solemnly by a stained-glass window. The imagery captured in the multicolored crystal pictured a creepy black clawed hand crushing a bleeding heart.

The room was full of skulls, scripture, and weaponry. The area stunk of a reckless draconian logic and the aged meats of many expired men and women. An enormous, electrified heating coil in the shape of a pentagram sat in the center of the room in front of the altar. Candles had been lit and an onyx cross, sized accordingly enough to accommodate Jesus Christ himself, was laid out on the floor.

Angel Rodriguez sat in the corner of the room nervously fidgeting and watching Damien with a keen eye. From his seat, he could see what appeared to be a body laying on the altar, motionless with a long lavender cloth draped over it. The master finally twisted his freakishly modified forehead toward him, then over to Jennacide.

“My sweet Orchid, what a pleasure it is to see you again,” he admitted to the seemingly lobotomized girl in the wheelchair.

“That’s not my name,” she mumbled.

“Of course, it is, my child.”

“But why?”

“Because you are my fertile garden, within your bushes is where my seed is spawned and cultivated. You bear the fruits of the future—fruits that can show us the future.”

Damien snapped his fingers and pointed to a rope that was tied off to a crank on the wall, which dangled an iron cauldron above the pentagram burner. “Angel! Activate the heat and let the broth descend!” he barked in an irritated fashion.

He immediately scurried out of his seat and to the giant heated wire to press the ignition switch. The warmth from the far-reaching satanic coil danced on his skin and added a bit of lighting to the gloomy ambiance. He stepped back a moment later and wrapped his fingers around the wall crank before spinning it counterclockwise.

They watched the bottom of the iron vat connect with the extreme heat source, and a short time later, the contents were already rumbling to a boil. The carmine pudding inside looked to be to Damien’s liking as he removed a spike-handled dagger off the wall from his collection of barbaric instruments.

Damien pushed the blade into a kilo of uncut that was sitting on the table beside him. It sliced through the plastic like nothing and he raised the cocaine mountain on the knife’s edge up to his nostrils. He sniffed the powder forcefully, and like a magician, made it all disappear.

“You’re going to help us find the man who wishes to harm my empire, the seed will afford us a glimpse.” Damien dumped out the remainder of the kilo into the rancid broth and then returned his attention to Orchid.

Jennacide pulled her arms back behind the chair firmly while Damien kneeled down before her huge stomach. “And this is how we see,” he said, carefully maneuvering the dagger to trace over her previous C-section scar.

Orchid groaned with a redundant agony just like the chorus of children whose blood she constantly swam in had for Jennacide. The woeful reaction caused a toothy grin to creep up on her sadistic face. As the warmth bled out, the fetus slimed in a mucus-like liquid dropped into Damien’s arms.

He slid the blood-smearred steel down the slightly underdeveloped boy’s torso and exposed his ribs and tiny beating heart behind them. He had been quiet in life but abruptly let out his first scream. Damien cut the gooey umbilical cord and grabbed the boy by his pecker and nuts.

He savagely shook the whining newborn over the sinister bubbling broth. As he tugged a bit harder, the unusable sexual organs ripped away and the child vanished in the sea of sinister brewing before them. Damien tossed the minuscule hunk of penis and testes into his mouth with the casualness of a theater patron eating a bucket of popcorn.

“Silence her!” Damien commanded, staring into the brew.

“Yes, master,” Jennacide replied, sliding a ball gag onto Orchid and promptly muting her pleas and pain. Then she tied her arms behind her back and wheeled her over by the stained-glass window.

Damien held his tattooed hands over the raging red ocean as his eyes enlarged. A swift parade of undecidable gibberish escaped his maw while his arms flailed up and down. Suddenly, the tone of the uncivilized juice in the hot cauldron mysteriously lightened. It rapidly transitioned from the standard sensuous maroon to a bleached beige color.

He snapped his head toward Angel violently, still grinding the fetus phallus between his rear molars. “Who’s the fat cracker!” he yelled as spit flew from his jaws.

Angel looked perplexed by the notion, “Cracker? Wh-What do you mean?”

“The one who threw everything but the kitchen sink at Levi and blew up the pig! Who the fuck do you think?!”

“It couldn’t have been...”

“So, you do know. I figured you just needed a little clue to trigger it. I don’t care who it was, you will bring him to me and you will bring him to me alive TONIGHT! Is that understood?”

“Yes, master,” he replied, turning to the doorway.

“Oh and, Angel? I’ve added some additional motivation for you.” Damien walked up to the altar and pulled away the deep purple cloth that topped it. A young teenager with a cloth sack on his head laid stationary beneath. He cradled his frozen frame and placed it atop the black cross on the ground. Damien removed the bag and revealed a face that looked eerily similar to his minion. Judging from Angel’s reaction, it wasn’t a coincidence.

“Bootsy! Bootsy! Damien, man, please, spare my brother! He ain’t got nothing to do with all this! He’s just a kid!”

“Silence!” he screamed, immediately stunting Angel’s words. “Don’t bother, he can’t hear you now. At least not yet anyway. But I think this might help him power through the dose,” he explained, tossing a threesome of craggy rusted nails and a mallet beside the ebony cross. “Jennacide, begin the motivation.”

Damien stepped down with all his weight on the boy’s wrist as Jenna aligned his palm with wood and readied the hammer. Angel stood by helplessly as she drove the spike down and ripped through his unsuspecting tissue. His screams of anguish echoed to the top rafters of the room.

As he squirmed desperately like an animal caught in a beartrap, Damien stomped down on his flailing arm and pinned his wrist to the wicked wood. Jennacide readied the second spike and smashed his second palm seamlessly.

Mangled bone shards sprouted around the human hole-punch and the strawberry sludge erupted out from the sides.

Angel squinted and shivered as each strike rushed down, pushing the discolored nail to distort his brother's temple more drastically. He wanted to stop Damien but his fears of both the corporeal and supernatural dimensions of his master suffocated any thought of the concept. No matter how unfair or vile his deeds stretched, Damien's rule would be final.

The hammer motioned up and down a few more times, leaving hot red splattered all over Jenna's gleeful and ghoulish face. She shimmied down and tied a length of rope in a way that helped to overlap his ankles and feet. As she hammered the next nail in, it pierced through the top of his ankle and poked out with some tendon and meat. She saved her most powerful blows for last and finished the grueling activity single-handedly.

"Get the hook," Damien commanded, pointing at a second wall crank near the far side of the lawless temple.

Jennacide hastily lowered the shiny hook down from the gloomy heavens and synched it into the circular metal hole at the foot of the now bloody cross.

"Crucifixion has the ability to kill a man in thirty-minutes to an hour, but the record survival here is twenty-three-hours and eight minutes. If you're lucky, you might have that much time, but if I was you, I'd hurry the fuck up."

Tears welled up in Angel's eyes as he replied, "Yes, master," displaying an ultimate obedience just as he always did.

"If all that isn't incentive enough for you, if you're not back in two hours with that piece of shit I'm gonna have Jennacide start sucking on his cock." Jenna flashed her filed enamel at Angel as he continued, "And I shouldn't need to remind you she gives extraordinarily messy blowjobs."

Jennacide's slit tongue crept through her sharp piercing grin. She licked her lips seductively, looking like some kind of

creature that would be slithering on the smoldering surface of the dark inferno. Her blasphemous image was appropriately burned in Angel's mind, as if his sibling's gruesome crucifixion wasn't enough motivation...

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A ROMANCE REKINDLED



Oliver finished sticking the rest of the bandages over the gashes in his recently reopened face. As he sealed the slash that stretched over his skinned nose and rinsed the blood out of the sink, he could hear her trying to get his attention.

Lydia's muffled petitions weren't quite audible due to the layers of duct tape he'd left glued over her mouth. Oddly, the tenor that she called out for attention with didn't seem abrasive, more like she was calling back to him sweetly. The way she had on sunnier days in the past with regularity.

As he wandered over to the bedroom, he took comfort in the calming sound of the rain outside. While he had tired of the incessant murkiness, the pattern of the gentle thudding consoled him in ways that he hadn't felt in weeks. When he stepped through the frame and saw her curdled body laying there deserted, it pulled at the strings of his heart. The thought crept into his mind that he should hear what she had to say.

He looked down at the newspaper sitting on the nightstand beside her. The ghastly headline read: 'Felons Found Dismembered in Dumpster and Lit on Fire!' As he picked up

the article, he realized he couldn't help his curiosity any longer. Oliver peeled up the corner of the gray tape and pulled it quickly like a Band-Aid. The result saw one of her decaying lips still sticking to the detached adhesive strip and the other torn in half and dangling off her face. The visual shocked Oliver internally but he still had no outward reaction.

"I'm not even mad about the lips, I know you didn't mean it, baby," Lydia explained gently.

Oliver was blindsided by the display of courtesy and understanding, "Wow, you haven't played that tune in a while. Can't remember the last time you called me baby..." He paused for more than a beat, working up the courage to say it, "honey bear."

His mangled face scrunched up as the left side of his lips pulled up to grin. His heart quivered with excitement having just dusted off the pet name he used to use on her when they first met.

"It feels like it used to now, baby. Now that my man is defending my honor I don't have to scream anymore. Look at that headline, I couldn't be prouder of you. That's what I call taking out the trash," she giggled.

"It don't stop there, honey, there's a few more on the list still. It's not just the ones that hurt us and mocked us that I'm putting down, it's the enablers too. The ones that let it happen are the guiltiest. They've all gotta die."

"That's right, kill 'em all, baby. Once they've all been stopped then everything will be alright again. Then we won't have to worry anymore. And maybe if this rain ever lets up, we can go back to the beach together. You know, like we always used to."

Oliver crumpled the newspaper and ripped it in half. "That sure would be nice," he said, imagining the smell of the ocean water and warm sun on his body. "I always liked the drive. The anticipation building with each mile that flew by. Just you and me and the radio..."

“The air conditioner never worked, so it was always hotter than hell in there. I guess two hours of roasting will do that but it made the water even more refreshing once we finally jumped in,” Lydia concurred.

Oliver tossed the inky shreds into the bin beside the bed, then turned his body and started to make his way for the kitchen.

“Where are you going, baby? You’re not leaving yet, are you?”

“I’m tired. Killin’ makes me tired and also kinda hungry believe it or not. Then I was gonna close my eyes for a few minutes, why?” he asked.

“Cause it kinda... it kinda makes me hot, Ollie... Thinking about the beach, and you ending the lives of all those evil people. I’m sorry I’ve been such a bitch, I’ve just been through a lot lately. But I still love you, Ollie, always have and always will.”

He thought about it for a moment, “I love you too, Lydia, always have and always will.”

“Then would you show me? Would you make love to me still?”

“Nothing would make me happier.”

“Oh, Ollie... I want it to be like the first time all over again. You were always so romantic and sweet to me. No one ever loved me so much. Can you go down to the store and get a few candles, baby?”

“Of course, honey bear, I’ll be back in a flash,” he replied, gleeful as he could ever recall being.

There was a Zen surging inside him that he remembered so fondly. It was the reflective beauty of nostalgia resurrected. He pranced down the stairs like a child on Christmas morning, ready to tear open the presents. When Oliver entered the store, he flipped the light switch on the wall but nothing happened.

“Did those cocksuckers turn my lights off?” he wondered aloud, not being able to recall the last time he completed any of his adult duties.

“Not yet, but I’m about to,” a voice whispered from the darkness a few feet away.

The painful thud of a pistol handle cracked against the side of Oliver’s cheekbone, loosening two of the molars that he so often found himself grinding together. Before he could compose himself, a follow-up shot rebroke his already rickety nose. He felt like a boxer losing count of the many injuries of yesteryear.

“Fuck! Just when it was starting to feel better!” he screamed manically.

“That ain’t the half of it, get back up, white boy,” Angel dared, standing over him casually.

Oliver used the shelves beside him to manage his way back to his feet again. Just as he turned around, Angel blasted him between the eyes again. This time, he knocked over the entire double-sided food shelf and fell into the muddle for products.

“You couldn’t let good enough be, could you? You got the drop on Levi, then you merked Officer Thomas. I don’t know how the fuck your retarded ass did it, but this is where it stops. Now my baby brother is dying because of your bullshit. And if he’s dead when we get back, believe me when I say you’re gonna suffer. And it ain’t gonna be quick like last time. This is gonna be some horror movie shit and it’s gonna last for months... maybe years,” Angel tried to wipe some of the blood off of the handle of his gat while Oliver squirmed around on the floor.

An acidic scent with a hint of dill began to creep up into his nasal cavity. He felt the broken glass cutting into his forearm and a wet mushiness pinned under his arm. A few jars of pickles—some shattered and some still intact—sat among the other non-perishable items. The yellow brine inside called to

him; the color of his past but no longer his present. It was his answer.

“Get the fuck up now!” Angel screamed.

Oliver’s bleeding knuckles discreetly palmed one of the jars as he turned his body. It was dark enough that he didn’t believe Angel would be able to realize what was headed for his smart-ass mouth until it was already too late.

When he heard the glass jar beginning to break apart, it was accompanied by a sickening crunch that he could only assume was Angel’s facial bones being permanently altered. As the smell of vinegar was unleashed, Angel went tumbling backwards into the wall of drink coolers.

The blood Oliver had left on the gun handle helped it slip free and land hard on the tile. As Angel tried to wipe the brine and glass out of his eyes, Oliver took to his heels and lunged for the gun. He got both hands around it while Angel was still getting his bearings back. When his stinging eyes finally came open, they adjusted to the darkness just in time to see the blood-smeared handle of the gun racing toward him.

When Angel came to, he couldn’t move. His arms were tied behind a chair and he was positioned in front of the store service counter. It was just as it was before when Oliver had been forced to miserably serve him on so many different terrifying occasions. Something else that concerned him was the fact that he’d been stripped naked and gagged. Whatever the reasoning, it was obvious that it couldn’t have been good.

When he was finally able to focus, he noticed that the lights in the store had been turned on but the exterior metal security protectors had been closed, creating a more intimate and chilling atmosphere.

“Hey there, sleeping beauty, I was wondering how long you’d be out for. I knew you had to wake up eventually though, and so here we are,” Oliver said, taking a deep drag of the cigarette.

Angel was fired up and shaking in the chair. Twitching with nerves and rage as the thoughts of Bootsie bleeding upside-down on Damien's black cross flashed through his head. How much time had gone by? Was he dead already? He hadn't even thought about the repercussions aimed at his own ass in the moment. For the first time in a long time, he wasn't thinking about himself.

"You know, I was just coming down here to get a few candles for the wife, have a nice romantic evening, but you just couldn't help yourself, could you? I mean, it's unreal, you fuckin' guys just ain't gonna leave me alone until I'm dead, are you? Or maybe until you're dead? Didn't think about that side of the coin much, did you? I'da thought that after what I did to your friend, what did it say his name was in the paper... Levi? I would've thought after you saw the level of don't give a fuck that I'm on, that you would've headed for the hills. But I'll be damned, I guess you got a pair on you," he said, exhaling a smoke load from his lungs.

"Took me a while to find my balls, but the journey was worth it. Now I'm highly motivated. Now I'm bringing a balance to this city like it's never seen before."

He walked from the front of the counter around to the back and stood tall in front of the rack of cigarettes. "How can I help you?" he asked as if his muzzled captive was going to somehow magically respond.

"Is it really that hard of a question? Apparently so, I mean, you were ready to cut my wife's fuckin' throat because I'm not some kind of mind reader, right? Isn't that what you said to me?"

Oliver's hands were beginning to tremble and his tone was starting to escalate as the adrenaline rush and violent thoughts entered him.

"Because you're so fucking important that you can't waste another second reminding me what brand you smoke?! Do I have that straight?! Well, news flash, tough guy, you ain't royalty, you ain't significant, you ain't SHIT! You're JUST.

LIKE. ME. Just another bug drowning in a gutter filled with blood...”

He lit up a fresh stogie, “And you know what? I’m willing to bet that you ain’t that tough either. I’m willing to bet that you break down and cry just like your little boyfriend when I turned him to mush. But we’re gonna do you a little bit different than him. You enjoyed playing games with me every day, makin’ sure you kept my memory in check, right? So, I figured, why don’t I do the same for you?”

He plucked a single cigarette up from the counter and brought himself back around to face Angel. “We’re gonna see how good your memory is today. I’m gonna let you take a drag of some of these bad boys,” he gestured to the wall of nicotine behind him, “and all you’ve gotta do is tell me which cigarette I gave you. You should be able to remember what the different brands taste like, don’t you think?”

He put out the cigarette that he’d just started a moment ago and put fire to the new one that he’d carefully selected. “Oh, and one last thing, don’t say another word besides the brand name that you’re guessing or you automatically lose. And each time you lose, you’ll be penalized...”

Oliver placed his tremoring hands on each side of his face while the smoke drooped out from his lips, “And I hope you understand just how serious this is,” he whispered.

Angel complied with his demands and accepted the cig as Oliver drew it from his own mouth and placed it in his. He was happy to pull a deep drag from the tobacco that the tip sparked and nearly went down by a quarter of the stick.

Oliver slapped him across the face so stiff that the meeting flesh reverberated around the store and the cigarette flew out of his mouth. Oliver snubbed out the flaming ember with the ball of his foot and looked over to Angel.

“So, what’s the verdict? Oh, and next time, take a reasonable puff, understood? You’re not supposed to be trying to enjoy this.”

“Newport,” he mumbled while nodding his head in submission.

“Very good! See, I remembered your brand this time! I wanted to start you off with an easy one, just sort of a showing of good faith.”

Oliver reached back behind the counter and tactfully selected another. He sparked it up and wedged it between his moist lips and waited.

“Now’s when the fun begins though. It’s time to see how broad those tastebuds are. I’m sure you’ve bummed a few cigs in your day that didn’t happen to be your brand of choice, that experience should be invaluable to you this evening...”

Angel continued to obey his rules and didn’t take too deep of a drag this time. He waited politely until Oliver saw fit and softly removed it from his mouth. “Look at that, you’re not such an animal after all. When boundaries are set and the incentive is scary enough, you can actually be civil.”

He waited for him to provide his guess patiently, a devilish smirk arose when he realized the speck of hesitation growing. *He doesn’t know. How exciting...* Oliver thought to himself.

“I don’t wanna add a time limit, but I will if I have to,” Oliver threatened.

“Camel!” Angel blurted out.

“Wrong!” he cried with glee, unveiling a partially crushed soft pack of Winston from his pocket.

Oliver lunged forward with the butt and pressed it into his bare bicep. He held Angel’s arm down in the chair and let it hang over his skin until it burned so deep that it was beginning to burrow.

“Get that shit off of me! Let me go, man!” Angel begged helplessly.

Oliver immediately extracted the Winston from his arm and took a big puff of it; reigniting the ash. He then grabbed him

by the neck with his free hand and choked him while steadying his head.

“I told you before, it’s time to play by my rules now, fuckface!” He drove the Winston down onto his tongue and heard the instant sizzle of saliva and muscle. As Angel’s eyes watered and he tried to bite down, Oliver used both hands to keep his jaws open and the cig continued searing his moist muscle.

He stepped back after feeling satisfied that he’d conveyed the message and looked at his handiwork. The scorched disproportionate circle on his arm was beginning to bubble out and drool leaked from his uncooperative mouth while his discolored tongue drooped down like a dog on a hot day.

“Please, man, Damien... he’s gonna kill my little brother. He nailed him to a fuckin’ cross, man.” He sounded exhausted just from the first round as he played the pity card.

“Really? That sounds horrific, but I’m not sure it matters. I’m not sure that you’re gonna ever see your brother again anyway. I had a family once too... a gorgeous and caring woman until street scum like you hardened her, defiled her, and eventually killed her. Now I’m alone, well, almost alone, it’s just me and vengeance now.”

“You gotta let me go,” he continued to plead with him.

“I don’t have to do a damn thing. In fact, I think it’s time for Angel to go to heaven. Not saying they’ll let you in, but you can’t stay here. You can knock on the door a few times, see if anybody answers, but I got a feeling that ain’t gonna happen.”

Oliver extracted nearly a full pack of Marlboros at once and flicked a Zippo in front of the cluster. As he puffed fanatically and sucked on the filters of all the cigarettes, a mini cloud of smoke drifted upwards.

Angel’s already watery eyes started to drip profusely. The overpowering fear of the unknown wormed through his brain as the foreshadowing of torture teased him.

“Angel, c’mon, buddy, I knew that you’d cry, but this early in? You really are just a two-bit fuckin’ punk, aren’t you?”

Oliver took the fully blazed handful of Marlboros and thrust the fiery end into Angel’s crotch. The platoon of smokes was big enough, and his dick was small enough, that the burning tips connected with most of his shaft, his helmet, and part of his ball-bag as well.

He jammed his forearm into Angel’s throat with his other limb and stunted the cries as he applied maximum pressure to his manhood. He held it in place for almost a full two minutes before inhaling a whiff of scorched pubic hair, causing him to break his hold on him.

“Ugh, that’s gross,” Oliver mumbled, setting the mostly extinguished cigs down and pinching his nose shut.

Angel was shaking in agony and still drooling from the mouth as he looked down at the bumpy and dotted flesh-scape that was peppered with various patches of skin that were now eaten away. The blood was starting to slightly seep out of his Frankenstein package, but most of the scalded flesh had suppressed any loss of fluid.

“By now, you can be sure you’re not walking away from this, but I can still help you. I can offer you peace. I can grant you retribution for what he did to your brother. Just tell me where Damien is...”

Angel continued to shake and sniffle like a child who had been reprimanded by extreme means. Through the pain and fright, his hatred for Damien still shined. He pictured his demonic presence laughing beside his dying brother’s hanging bloody carcass as Bootsie struggled to draw air into his tiny lungs.

“Go to the Glenwood Projects...” he offered, trailing off.

“What’s his address?”

“Address? Man, he owns the whole fuckin’ place. There’s no telling exactly where he’ll be... that’s the best I can do for you.”

“You did the right thing, Angel, too bad you didn’t start just a few weeks ago,” he explained, removing his shoes. He then peeled off each of his gnarly white tube socks and set one inside the other. “I’m gonna wrap things up, seeing as you told me what I needed to know,” Oliver explained as he walked down the back aisle.

He set his mitts on two four packs of D-sized disposable batteries. As he returned to the storefront, he set Angel’s gag back in place before he could offer any pointless pleas and cut open the annoying packaging with a pair of scissors.

“You know, I’m starting to feel like the Energizer Bunny these days. I’ve been going non-stop since the last time I saw you.”

He emptied the numerous girthy batteries into his doubled-over sock and twirled the end he was holding a few times around. He raised the lumpy cloth and swung it down on top of Angel’s scalp. The taxing exteriors of the energy cells ripped into his cranium and thudded against his skull. The severe gash that manifested subsequently gushed a waterfall of blood that could be seen clearly under his curled hair.

“I just keep going,” Oliver raised the burgundy sock again and smacked him in the jawline. “And going,” the next blow landed against his chin with even more velocity, busting it open. “And going! And going!”

Oliver kept repeating the redundant gimmick like the same monotone voice that accompanied the bunny in all the commercials. The carmine spatter found the floor and the walls as he continued to swing for the fences. He snickered momentarily, considering the odd irony of that situation. Being isolated and killing people had certainly given him a bizarre sense of humor.

Once the joke had run its course, so had Angel. He’d hit him so many times that his face looked closer to a mutilated version of the Toxic Avenger than a gritty kid raised by the streets.

He dropped the contents of the saturated sock onto the counter and grabbed the radio he normally listened to during work. “Get some tunes going,” he murmured, inserting the slaughter-caked batteries into the back of the device.

He tweaked the volume down a few notches and searched for something romantic. Finally, some guy that sounded more like a girl used his whiney voice to croon about heartache and never giving up. It was perfect. As Oliver made his way back toward the stairs, he paused for a moment, “Ah! Almost forgot the candles!”

He sidestepped over and looked at some of the standard tall long-burn religious ones, but the word ‘unscented’ seemed to pop out to him. “She is getting pretty ripe up there,” he said to himself. He finally located a scented one, but then at the last-minute thought better of it, remembering that he enjoyed the smell of her rotting cadaver.

When he returned back upstairs, he set the radio at the bedside, dimmed the lights, and placed a few candles around the room. When Oliver stripped his clothing off, his face was still bleeding from Angel’s pistol-whipping. As he crawled into bed beside Lydia, she instantaneously took notice.

“Ollie, you’re bleeding, baby, what happened to your face?”

“Oh, it’s nothing, you should see the other guy.” They both chuckled in unison. “You’d be proud of me though. Angel, that piece of shit with the gold tooth, he tried to get the jump on me downstairs. But it didn’t happen, I put a couple of packs of cigarettes out on him and then beat him to death. It wasn’t even that difficult, it all just felt so natural to me. I think I’m getting better at this...”

“Damn, I think you’re right, and that gets me hot, baby,” she whispered seductively.

Oliver’s prick was becoming solidified at the thought of his woman getting so riled up over his heroic actions. As he edged closer into her, a large family of flies buzzed away to watch on from a distance. He kissed her where her lips normally would

have been, tonguing at the brownish stiff gums, slurping up the decomposition fluid and sucking on her half-hanging lip. Oliver was so excited that he slipped the crusty tissue all the way into his mouth and massaged it with his suckle.

His fingers dropped down toward her nether regions but just as he was about to slide his way inside, she called to him.

“Ollie, before you put it inside me, make sure you take the razors out...”

He'd forgotten all about the booby-trap he'd left inside her that sliced Levi's monster meat to ribbons. It's a good thing that she'd been kind enough to remind him, otherwise, he might have suffered a similar fate. His renewed interest and reaffirmed trust in Lydia was only growing with each extra moment that they spent together.

Oliver rolled off the bed and extracted a pair of needle-nose pliers out from the tool bag that was still in the closet. He returned to her body and spent a few minutes digging the razor strips out of her crusty worm-laden vagina. A militia of maggots trailed behind each piece of the corroded metal that he pulled out.

“Now I'm ready for you, take me, Ollie,” Lydia whispered eagerly.

Oliver grabbed a handful of the squirming maggots and pinned them against his hard shaft while he started to jerk it. As they erupted, the moist contents of their bellies lubricated his cock with morsels of Lydia's dead flesh.

His erection and overwhelming lust to be inside his wife again was so firm that it forced the ridged dead walls of her hole to accommodate him. The sliming chaffing interior still felt wonderous as it applied a pleasurable compression similar to a blood pressure cuff.

The intensity of the interaction didn't give him much time to take care of her, but thankfully, he didn't need much. Things were so different now as she looked at him, eyes widened and

screamed, “Fuck, I’m cummin’, Ollie, don’t stop, don’t stop! DON’T YOU FUCKIN’ STOP!”

Oliver continued to pound away while the pool of maggot under his taint tickled his balls. He leaned back slightly and rubbed her frozen clit feverishly from side to side. He was about to cum too, and just as she let out her scream of relief, Oliver erupted inside her. The burning load of creamy semen left all of the larvae deep inside her snatch, drowning and warm. He couldn’t believe how much had changed, everything felt perfect to him again. Everything was perfect.

He rolled over to the side as the starry-eyed tunes continued to leak out of the radio speaker. Then he turned his gaze back to the woman he loved more than anything.

“Oh, Ollie, that was AMAZING, no one’s ever fucked me like that before.”

He smiled briefly and laid back on the wet bug-littered pillow.

“What’s wrong, baby?” Lydia wondered.

“It’s not done yet.”

“But I know you’re gonna finish it. Don’t worry about Damien, his time is running short.”

“I’m not, I’m thinking about Ramon and those dirtbag cops that buried him.”

“So, kill them first, it sounds like that’d make you feel better. It all starts at the top and trickles down, right? I know that killing the captain of an entire police department won’t be easy, but just look at everything you’ve done so far. None of it was easy. I think you’re ready, baby. The sky’s the limit for you now...”

“It all starts at the top...” he reiterated, finally closing his eyes and drifting off into a well-deserved slumber.

KILL THE HEAD AND THE BODY WILL FOLLOW



The Oldsmobile's tires created considerable waves as they churned through the slick trash-laden streets. Despite the unaccommodating conditions, tiny skirts, neon colors, high heels, and bare skin still wandered the boulevard.

"Nothing ever stops 'em, huh, Cap?" Lieutenant Briscoe asked but it was really more of a statement.

"Well, this goddamn rain hasn't stopped in weeks, they'd starve or go straight if they weren't out there. Nobody wants that," Captain Mooney replied, lighting up a cigarette.

A girl who looked like she'd survived a few close encounters locked onto them. She sported a famished frame and only three deteriorating teeth appeared visible in her mouth as she 'smiled' at them. Her ratty tangled hair, cock-eyed gaze, and fragmented press-on nails did nothing to help her appeal. The inescapable icing on top was a frightening scar that ran over her bumpy throat. It was impossible for someone

who gazed upon the tissue not to wonder if the woman's windpipe might've been slit in the past.

"Jesus Christ, you see that? Lookin' like fuckin' Night of the Living Dead out here tonight." Briscoe couldn't take his eyes off the train wreck.

"Tell me about it, I'm glad we're not dealing with these mashed-up sluts anymore. No more diseased meat curtains, it's only extra rare filet mignon now."

"Did you fuck that one yet... what's her damn name, Ming? Or is it Meg? She's got the lil' snake tattoo around her snatch? They just got her in a few days ago, she's a real badass type. It took me hours to break her."

"No, but it sounds like I been missing out, I'll have to get my hands on her tonight I guess."

"You'd like her, she's a real fighter, only about four foot nine, toughest little bitch I ever tangoed with though."

The buzzing street life around them began to dwindle and the lit lamps faded as they transitioned to an even more derelict district. The run-down buildings surrounded them as the darkness invaded. The only light source came from their headlights and the flickers that escaped through the huddles of adrift creeps warming themselves by the trash barrel fires.

Even over the relaxing doo-wop love songs that the cassette deck emitted, shouting and fighting could still be heard clearly off in the distance. They closed in on a dilapidated mill that was up against the waterfront by some shipping docks. The region that was destitute and abandoned save for the substantial number of vermin that scurried through the old walls, gutters, and toxic sewers. The tall barbwire fence that surrounded it seemed out of place for an area that no one even knew existed.

Briscoe pulled the car over, threw it in park, and exited the vehicle with his keys in hand. Mooney popped his door handle and squeezed his obese stomach up and out. He assumed the role of driver while Briscoe approached the gate which had a

series of locks on it. He deactivated each one and screeched the rusty old barrier open.

Mooney drove the car in and waited for Briscoe to button it all back up. They did their best to keep any unwanted guests at bay, but just about a dozen yards down behind some dying bushes, there was a missing patch of fencing. A pair of bolt cutters laid in a puddle in front of a hole that was just wide enough for a fat man to squeeze through.

Oliver had been living in the abandoned mill for a few days now. He wasn't taken by surprise when they entered, he was crouched and alertly tucked in behind countless piles of moldy busted pallets. He couldn't continue to stay at his house any longer. Angel had found him there, so there was no telling who Damien would send next. Whether it was another one of his disturbed minions or a dirty member of the precinct, he had zero desire to find out.

Oliver had been keeping an eye out on the captain and some of his top guys. The brazen bastards didn't even really hide what they were doing. It was probably because they knew no one was looking. They sought out their opposers, and then, one way or another, they made them go away. They had the luxury of playing God in a bullet-proof vest and took full advantage of it.

The one thing they didn't count on was an over the edge convenience store clerk that had nothing left to live for. They could play God all they wanted; it wasn't going to change a damn thing anymore. It had all been taken from him already; his lover, his manhood, his friendships, his business, his house, his fiscal security, and livelihood. And as a result of wiping everything away, they had also taken his fear. They had unknowingly made extinguishing the evils that they produced his only priority.

By stalking them, Oliver began to understand their patterns. They seemed to like coming to the warehouse and he wanted to know why. Like the human herpes they were, he knew they

would eventually have to resurface in a smaller group. He was confident now but not stupid. He knew that going all wild west on a pack of cops would cut him short before he got to Damien Sanchez's neck.

He took some canned stews and soup with him from the house and mostly ate that and watched the sewer rats horse around. He'd found a grimy mop bucket which he used to defecate and relieve himself in. He had a feeling that Officer Thomas's deathbed snitch job was actually the truth. They had to be the ones supplying or at least okaying the filth that put Ramon away. *Why would he lie?*

If Mooney was dirty, he knew it wouldn't take long for him to find out, and sure enough, the same day he started tailing him, he took a trip to the mill. He didn't know what they were doing there but it didn't seem like anything good could transpire in the clandestine conditions that the basement of a decaying and dilapidated warehouse provided. He also noted that they'd rode there in an undercover car and in plain clothes in the middle of the night. The setup and setting couldn't be more suspicious.

They crept in through the doorway, activating the locks behind them, just like they had before. Next, they headed for the freight elevator. *Taking out two is doable, I've got the drop on them, I've got the advantage,* Oliver thought.

He'd spent hours trying to find a way into the basement while they were away but determined there was only one option to gain entry, and Briscoe and Captain Mooney had just finished unlocking and activating it. There were no stairs, whatever their dirty secret was sat in, the cellar had been cautiously guarded.

As the men disappeared behind the elevator doors, Oliver readied himself. He stood up from behind the neglected stacks of wood and popped an extended magazine into the Uzi. He knew the only way to get in was to go down the elevator while they were already down there. *They don't got the firepower to*

fuck with me, Oliver thought, removing the safety and calling the elevator.

The squeaky doors came to a close and Oliver held his breath as he selected the button labeled with the letter ‘B’ to his left. He positioned himself strategically, hiding as much of his obese frame as he could behind the sliver of cover at the edges of the descending cell.

When he came to a stop, the head-over-heels melody of a familiar doo-wop classic began to fill the box. As the upbeat tune continued, the lone dull light in the freight elevator flickered. When Oliver finally mustered the courage to peek his balding shiny scalp around the frame, he only saw darkness and a long crumbling stone wall with a door in the distance that was partially cracked open.

The oddly placed entrance was approximately twenty yards away and emanating an eerie pink glow from the open portion and the boundaries. As he slyly approached the opening, he was able to get a look at the happenings inside.

A pair of square cages made of metal fencing were erected side by side. One contained a couple of dozen women that looked to be of Asian descent. They were all scantily clad and huddled together in a fearful manner. The second cage contained two more that had been separated from the rest. They were both bleeding and battered, but under the hot rosy lighting, they just looked wet.

The more athletic of the two was crying and yelling in a language that Oliver couldn’t decode. The girl’s legs were wrapped around the throat of a much smaller girl, cutting off her airflow.

“Kill that fuckin’ bitch now!” Briscoe yelled, smacking his hands against the chain-link fencing. His other hand held a long spear that he stuck into the fence and used to stab the dying girl’s thigh.

Captain Mooney watched on from a seated position. A slender girl naked all but for the rope of her G-string was on

all fours atop a small table beside him. She leaned over and deepthroated his cock while he pressed the barrel of his gun against her brainstem.

As Briscoe continued to poke her flesh with the razor-tipped instrument, blood began to escape the cut. “Looks like this one’s about done to me,” he said, smiling back at Captain Mooney.

“I’m about fuckin’ done too,” Mooney replied as the pitch of his voice climbed a few octaves. The girl blowing him tried to come up for air but Mooney grabbed a clump of her hair and forced her lips to remain at the base of his cock. As she squirmed and gagged, he kept his wild eyes on the murder before him. A thick wave of ejaculation exploded from Mooney’s cock and filled up her throat as he watched the suffocating girl in the cage fade away.

Mooney pushed the girl’s face off of his crotch and pushed her over. He stood up with his shiny spoke point straight out. “Alright, it’s your turn now,” Mooney said, wiping the saliva and cum off his lap and zipping up his fly. “Who you picking?” he asked, looking over at the coop of trembling candidates.

“Makes my cock hard watching her choke out these skinny ones, but I think we need to spice things up a little this time,” he replied, approaching a table that held a variety of crude weaponry. He dragged his hand over the various knives, hammers, and swords before settling on a meat cleaver. He swept it off the table and then entered the cage.

Mooney kept his gun on the ‘winner’ in the cage as Briscoe loosely tied the tarnished cleaver to a short length of rope that dangled downward at the center of the cell. He then grabbed a handful of the dead girl’s locks and dragged her petite frame out through the entrance.

“Help me out a second. It’s a little chilly down here, let’s start up a fire before round two,” Briscoe said, stuffing the limp body into a firepit that looked to be filled with the charred bones of previous fighters.

They both turned their backs to the still unseen Oliver as Briscoe dowsed the warm static corpse in gasoline. Mooney extracted a matchbook from his pocket and stuck a cigarette between his lips, preparing to ignite her.

Oliver knew that it was time to go in. Any hesitation would result in a further loss of life. He kicked the door open and let off a blast that launched several shots into the wall mere feet away from where the despicable lawmen stood.

“Guns on the ground now or the next ones don’t miss!” he growled.

“Who the fuck are you?!” Mooney yelled.

He let off another barrage right at their wingtips that kicked up a small cloud of dust. “I said now, goddamn it!”

“Okay, kid, just relax,” Briscoe said, producing a Berretta and tossing it in the dirt.

Mooney followed his lead and dropped his revolver down beside it. “I don’t know what you think you’re doing, but this is official police business.” Mooney pointed to his twinkling badge.

“Yeah, it looks like you’re really serving and protecting, Captain. In fact, Officer Thomas told me what a bang-up job you and the rest of the department were doing... right before I blew his fuckin’ face off that is.”

“Oh, so you’re the cowboy that blew up the funeral parlor, huh?” Briscoe uttered as his hand began to drift slowly behind his back.

“Put your fuckin’ hands up or they’re gonna have to reopen it again just for you, smart guy,” Oliver threatened.

“So, this is how my tax dollars are being spent, imported rape and human cock-fighting? Be sure to add that to the reelection campaign next time, you fat prick.” Oliver looked over at the naked girl, then back to the pair of sick fucks.

“Listen, just calm down. I’m sure we can work this out. You’d be much better off with us than against us. We can offer

you things no one else can. Money, protection, pussy, just fuckin' name it and it's yours," Mooney offered, attempting to barter with him.

"What if I just wanna see you bleed? What if it's not about elevating myself as much as it is about bringing you down? So you and your parasitic pals can see what it's like to be helpless and handicapped by culture."

"It doesn't have to—"

Oliver didn't allow Briscoe to finish, "I don't wanna hear it! I'm talking now and you're gonna listen! He looked over at the frightened girl that still had cum leaking from her lips.

"Take their clothes off, please," he said, gently hoping that she would understand.

She looked confused until a beautiful girl with a tattoo of a cherry blossom on her arm spoke to her in their native tongue. The translation went seamless and the girl began to strip the vile men down layer by layer.

"Thank you, what's your name?" Oliver asked, letting his eyes drift only momentarily to the girl in the cage.

"Maly," she said humbly.

"Well, Maly, I'm Oliver, tell the rest of them that I'm not here to hurt you, just them. There's no reason to be scared anymore."

"Thank you," she replied through a lip that quivered with emotion and gratefulness.

Mooney and Briscoe were now showcasing their slothful bodies and underwear, and Oliver couldn't help but smile and feel warm inside. "Ugh, needless to say you ain't no fuckin' underwear models. Get in the cage," he muttered.

"It doesn't have to be like this—"

The negotiation was cut short before it could flourish with another half-dozen cartridges ejecting from the Uzi. The

bullets kicked up more dust just inches from their feet. “Get in the fuckin’ cage now!” Oliver screamed.

The men finally complied, and as they stepped inside, Oliver hailed the girl who had survived her combat that was still inside. She exited with an overwhelmed look still leaving her in shock as Oliver fastened the cage lock shut.

He searched through their smelly piles of damp clothing and eventually removed a ring of keys. After taking a few attempts, he had the cage with the horde of terrified girls inside it unlocked.

As they filed out, Oliver’s eyes met with Maly’s again and he asked, “What do you want to do with them? What’s fair?”

She looked at the wicked men as they stood awkwardly stewing in their emotions that were so familiar to her and the rest of the girls. The grueling horror that they’d forced them to digest day after day, night after night. She damn well knew what was appropriate...

“They will fight,” Maly said with an absolute certainty smothering her tone.

The meat cleaver still hung in the center of the cell and the long spear-like poles that were used to ‘motivate’ the contestants were still in front of it. Maly picked up one of the nasty javelins and stuck it through the chain linkage, aiming it at the perverts inside. The other girls quickly took note and found their own custom-made lances and surrounded the fencing. They were all just aching to plunge their knifepoints into their evil abusers. They were ready to become the sadists that Mooney and Briscoe had driven them into becoming.

“Well, you heard her, fellas, I’d get to it before they get impatient with you,” Oliver said, staring into the metal box emotionlessly.

“You can’t... you can’t do this! We’re the police! You’ll never get away with it! You’ll—” Briscoe’s words were cut short by the tip of the long spear slicing into the edge of his love handle. Maly placed it strategically, ensuring that he

avoided any significant damage. She wanted them to feel all they'd felt.

Briscoe dropped to one knee and looked up at his superior who was already trying to untie the gleaming cleaver that dangled between them. "Son of a bitch," he yelled, bull-rushing him and sticking a shoulder tackle into Mooney's flabby gut.

The meat cleaver fell into the dirt as the pair of perverts began to scratch and claw at each other. "Sorry, Cap," Briscoe said, driving his fist into Mooney's piggish snout. The right side of Briscoe's beefy knuckles cracked a third of his front tooth off. "But if it's between you and me," he cocked back and readied the next blow, "I've gotta put you out." The next shot landed right in his blubbery neck and found the Adam's apple that was hidden in the neck brace of lard.

It got mashed like it was time to make pie; the stomach-turning crunch of his splintering cartilage pierced into his throat flesh. The barbarity of the heinous assault that Briscoe was inflicting on his close friend didn't cause him to hesitate. The pain of icy steel piercing his flesh had melted his already flimsy loyalty. He knew that the captain was out of shape and a dozen years his senior. Putting his already winded ass out wouldn't be a problem, but what came after still held the question marks.

"Sorry, old-timer," Briscoe said, picking up the cleaver and raising it over his head.

"Larry... please, wait!" he screamed.

The cleaver was already in a chopping motion as the final words left his puffy scowling grimace. It was razor-sharp when it landed smack between his lips. The force of the hack shaved off a thin layer from the top of his tongue and landed about halfway through his spinal cord. A disturbing gurgling noise rumbled in the massive slit from the metal that was buried ear to ear. Captain Mooney laid shuddering, astounded and helpless.

Briscoe stomped his foot down on Mooney's forehead and had to use his strength to unwedge the blade from his internal bone. Once he'd freed it, the wound he'd created called to him. It was deep, gory, and inviting. The slice was wide enough that when he hit it at full power a second time, it nearly cut the entire top of his head off.

Briscoe stuck his hand in Mooney's mouth and pushed down on the blade, disconnecting the remainder of tissue and bone. He wrapped his blood-drenched fingers around Mooney's balding hair and took hold of the top of his skull. As he stood up, his eyes couldn't leave the rest of his body. His round outline laid twitching with a river of red draining out and a mutilated tongue flailing about its top like some sort of alien species.

Briscoe held up the dripping hunk of gore with an uncommon madness in his eyes. It was like he'd tapped into the memories of old gladiator films he'd seen for guidance. "I did it! I won!"

"Congratulations," Oliver replied, sticking the Uzi through the cage and letting off a trio of slugs.

Oliver aimed the shots at where he felt they belonged—his genitals. As the bullets tore through his baby-maker, they left the front of his underwear hanging with the ravaged meat of his manhood and showers of warmth. He dropped both the cleaver and the top of Mooney's head and fell to the floor, clutching his freshly deformed cock.

As he shrieked like a terrified child, Oliver unlocked the cage. The girls that were surrounding it patiently waiting to plunge their spears into the merciless bastards. They began to file in with tight-lipped smirks splattered across their faces.

The prodding started immediately, the knife-edges disappeared then reappeared and the process repeated. Briscoe felt his body parting and the sharp agonizing penetration in many places at once. As the anguish intensified, his pain broke boundaries that he had no idea were established. His liver was punctured, then his stomach, then both his lungs and both

large and small intestines in unison. The skewering of vital organs and utterly desensitized destruction of his entire ungodly shell continued until Briscoe looked like a sad pile of deformed grisly honeycomb; sticky with syrupy oozing plasma and gruesome grottos galore.

The girls let Briscoe's body serve as the pincushion for their spiked staffs. As they exited the bloody cell, several of the rods sprouted off his failing body in different directions. His final moments were spent laying in the dirt leaking and mumbling incoherent phrases to his 'good friend', Mooney.

Now that the devils had been dealt with, Maly and the rest of the girls turned their full attention to Oliver. They were understandably quite emotional but displayed their thanks and praise as best they could. Some hugged him, others knelt and kissed his hand, while others cried.

Oliver was not accustomed to playing the hero or receiving any kind of commendation or kindness from strangers. It was all very bizarre for him but it felt wonderful. He never expected to feel good again, he had only expected to quench his thirst for revenge with buckets of blood and bullet casings.

"Thank you so much, Oliver, you saved us from terrible death," Maly said with tears in her eyes.

"Well, it's... it's my pleasure," he said, not really sure what to say next.

"Daithom! The Daithom!" From the crowd of girls, the words started to crop up, paired with a fearful tone.

Oliver was confused and hadn't the slightest clue what they were referring to. He looked to Maly to explain, "What's Daithom?"

"Not what, but who. The Daithom is the man who take us from Cambodia and bring us here... The Daithom means The Big Hands..."

"Where is he now?"

Maly started to physically tremble just thinking about him, “He on the boat...” she said, pointing to the door at the far end of the building.

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THE BIG HANDS



The ship was enormous and just the sheer size and blatancy of a vessel of such magnitude let Oliver understand that there were powerful people at play. The boat was rushing through the ocean waters and crossing over into shadowy parts of the world to snatch up and funnel the defenseless. Their lives served only to be a decoration on the foulest forms of American decadence. The slave trade and human trafficking were alive and well, so it was up to Oliver to eradicate the virus.

Oliver noticed the faint glimmer of the sub-deck light from a stairwell, inviting him into the belly of the ominous vessel. There was a chained fencing that obstructed entry, but after a few tries with the captain's keyring, he gained access. Oliver tiptoed down, feeling more high-strung than he did during any of his prior confrontations. Up until then, he'd known exactly what to expect from the opposition, he had them and their locations scouted to the max. This time, he felt off.

All he had to go on was the rapidly regurgitated series of superstitious ghost stories that Maly had chattered off

frightfully just before he'd boarded the ship. A chill ran down his spine when he thought about their descriptions. They made him sound more like the Boogeyman or Grim Reaper than a depraved kidnapper. The suppositious ravings were getting to him, echoing in his head; *if The Big Hands come for you, there is no escape.*

Having the element of surprise and the Uzi comforted him slightly, but as he crept down the metal steps, dread filled him to the point of overflow.

He wear a big black mask and have long arms and finger. So long that he can snatch up three or maybe even four girl at a time. When he sees you... he just laugh and show you his black teeth, Maly's broken English ran through his head and reverberated over and over.

He tried to push what he hoped were tall tales out of his mind and find this man they saw as a monster. As the lighting continued to cut on and off sporadically, he listened carefully and moved around the steamy piping. *Maly said he stays down here until they send him out for more fresh meat. I really hope he's sleeping,* Oliver thought.

As he reached the end of the hallway, he started to hear sounds of an animated nature. Panting in a pleased tone and a flurry of words that sounded very much like the language the girls had been speaking in the warehouse. It had to be him.

He caught a glimpse from afar through the doorless threshold into The Big Hands' den of deviancy. The girls were right; he looked like something out of a horror film.

The Big Hands stood beside a pair of stacked up mattresses that were saturated with brutishly milked humanity. He must have been close to six and a half feet tall and only wore a loose-fitting leather mask and black jeans. His frame was both lanky and tan while his spidery hands looked so disproportionate to the rest of his body that it bordered on an LSD-like visual. His features were exaggerated like some kind of Dick Tracy villain but weirder...

Beside his gore-draped slumber space sat a table with a woman who looked to have been bludgeoned to death and strangled. Her neck had many rows of marks and was compressed to unusual dimensions. The many rows of pressure made her neck look like a purple ribbed condom.

The Big Hands had two tense metal chains that were attached to the walls on each side of the room. Each had a finely-pointed hook on the end that dug in between the dead girl's tibial tendon and bone at the back of each ankle. The result were legs that were spread so far to the left and right they could have been political rivals.

The Big Hands used his unorthodox fingers to rub her clit, and with his other hand, he grouped his digits all together and enthusiastically plowed them back and forth. He laughed and giggled like a halfwit might as he increased his speed in and out of her.

Oliver focused on the creepy activity and knew it was time; he couldn't save the girl but he could stop The Big Hands now for good.

“Hey, five-finger-discount,” he yelled at the freakish figure.

The Big Hands turned his head slowly without saying a word. The mouth slit in his mask exposed a nerve-racking midnight grin. His wet sable fangs were frothing with an inky fluid that trickled down over his chin and hairy bare chest.

“I'm afraid we need all hands on deck!” Oliver pressed down on the trigger and rattled off a burst at his freakshow hands. The steaming lead tore through his wrists and forearms until there was nothing left connecting them together.

One of the newly severed hands fell onto the floor of the vessel. The second, which he'd been using to finger-fuck the deceased girl, remained lodged in the dead tissue gouge that surrounded her vaginal cavity. The Big Hands didn't show emotion, he didn't show pain, he just started to move toward Oliver in rebellious fashion, cackling manically like a total fucking lunatic.

Oliver quickly squeezed down on the trigger to let off another spurt but nothing came out. “What the fuck, c’mon, you son of a bitch!” Oliver yelled, smacking the chamber of the Uzi. As The Big Hands closed in on him, he realized the sickening truth—the machine gun was jammed.

The lanky freak tackled Oliver while his bleeding limbs juiced generously all over his chest and face. The Big Hands used his nubs and split bones to club down onto and stab Oliver’s face as aggressively as possible.

Oliver took the hyper strikes in stride as it seemed like it was becoming a recurring theme for him. His untidy wounds were prone to reopening and that scuffle was no exception. While he used his left arm to defend himself from the slicing stubs, he used the right to reach behind him.

Oliver hadn’t planned on things getting out of control, but based on the campfire stories Maly had told him before, he’d never been so glad to have taken extra precautions. As the disturbed weirdo continued to chuckle demonically and spit up his licorice liquid from his stained incisors, Oliver slipped Mooney’s revolver out from the back of his waistband.

He cocked the hammer back and smashed it into his grill while pulling the trigger in one fell swoop. Oliver’s murder game precision and experience were beginning to pay off.

The black-hearted bastard’s stained choppers fell down onto Oliver’s face as the bullet he’d let off traveled directly into the fiend’s mouth. Its unavoidable exit was instantaneously fatal, ripping through his menacing cerebellum and exploding up into the air like a fleshy fireworks display.

When The Big Hands’ carcass went limp, it fell over Oliver’s sternum and face. The black and broken smile leaked his skull contents from the rear forward and through the new hole that had been blown in his happiness. Even though he was teetering on the verge of flatlining he still managed to let out a few tiny giggles.

Even as Oliver dragged his decimated frame up the steps to the main deck, The Big Hands still coughed up an eerie cackle. And finally, as the mortified but relived girls watched Oliver dump their modern monster's bleeding and peculiar body overboard, a gurgle of glee could still faintly be heard just prior to the unleashing of their deepest rejoice.

Their elation was euphoric, the tears were a symbol of their shackles being shattered. Once the girls were able to breathe easy, knowing that their nightmare was finally over, Oliver felt a bit lost.

Maly looked at him and asked, "What now, you call police?"

Oliver looked down for a moment, almost embarrassed to say it, "Those," he pointed to the old warehouse, "those *were* the police."

A disgusted look came over Maly's expression as the look of a wanderer's confusion transferred to her. Another one of the girls asked her a question that Oliver couldn't understand. The conversation began to branch off; chatter ensued amongst the different women as they searched for a response. They seemed to settle the discussion down moments later, their enthusiasm sounded fairly positive.

Maly turned back to him, "Sela say she can drive boat. She work many years, her father is fisherman."

Oliver knew that her suggestion sounded incredibly risky but it was still probably a better alternative than bringing them into the city. The cancer was so deep in the slums that it was in its bones, in its very foundation. There was no way of telling how far it had spread. The women were free now and anything was a better option than again risking their freedom.

He didn't fight it. As the ship started up, Maly and the rest of the girls bid Oliver a weeping farewell. They had only known him for a short time but his kindness and bravery had given them their lives back and ended the inhumane conditions and daily tortures. Many of them kissed his bloody and

distorted face and some even had to be pried away as they readied to make their exit.

Oliver waited at the docks and watched the ship float away into the brackish waters until it looked microscopic. When it finally vanished into the night's sky, he turned around and made his way back to the car.

He popped the trunk open and smiled down at Lydia's maggot-riddled corpse. "Ollie, I'm so damn proud of you, baby... but I've got to be honest, I'm a little jealous too. You saved all of those girls and they really legitimately love you. You're something else, you know that? I missed you, baby."

"Thanks, honey bear, I missed you too. But living in there a few days was worth it, those sick fucks had their last round of fun," Oliver replied.

"There's only one left now, I can't believe it's almost finished."

"Me neither."

"Ollie?"

"Yeah?"

"When this is all over, do you think that we can maybe go to the beach again, for old time's sake?"

Oliver gently ran his hand through her slimy and putrefying hairline. "I think I can accommodate that," Oliver said with a bloody smile.

LAST CALL



Oliver awoke feeling incredibly grimy; showering had escaped him since his last murderous conflict and the grainy gore of his targets was still matted upon him. He was confused until his wheels finally started to turn. He didn't recall parking in such an active area of the city but reckoned that he was just too damn exhausted to remember.

Somehow, it was already night again, the long violent evening had taken it out of him and left him snoring through the entirety of another day of torrential downpours. He was lucky that his car wasn't broken into while he was resting; the part of town he was in wasn't exactly Pleasantville.

He wiped the drool from his jaw and looked out the windshield. It was hard to make out what he saw from the constant mask of the flooding rains, but in the blurry pool, he could make out a payphone just a few yards away. In a short while, he'd be headed to the Glenwood Projects to complete his cleansing, to finish off the scum of the slums that had a hand in erasing his life. But he still had one other thing that he needed to do first.

Oliver exited the foggy car and let the chilly rain dance on his body. He picked up the payphone and dug the wallet out of his backside. Wedged amongst a bunch of other shit that he hadn't paid any mind to in weeks, he fished out Detective Treadwell's business card.

He couldn't quite put his finger on why, but the man had left a good impression on him. Or maybe it was the fact that there was no one left to tell; everyone else was either dead or locked up except for Treadwell.

The call might be in vain, there was a good chance that he might be just as dirty as the rest of the law he'd gone to war with, but deep down, Oliver didn't believe that. Someone had to change the trajectory of the department, maybe Treadwell was that guy to start shooting straight bullets. There weren't any other viable options.

The receiver buzzed in his ear until it cut out halfway, "Detective Treadwell."

"Captain Mooney and Lieutenant Briscoe are at the old Pike Warehouse, you ever been there?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm just asking if you've ever been out to Pike Warehouse, detective. Have you or haven't you?"

"Why would I go somewhere that's been closed for almost three decades? Who the hell is this?"

Oliver felt convinced by his tone that he'd never been there and was most likely not part of the vast conspiracy. Maybe some good would come out of the phone call after all.

"Who I am isn't important... but you need to get over there and see what kind of operation they had running. They were trafficking girls, killing them, and forcing them to kill each other. It's all kinda fucked over there. There wasn't much that they didn't do down in that basement. You'll find Mooney and Briscoe down there... well, what's left of them. I don't know how deep this goes, it might go higher than them..."

“Sir, filing a false report could make a hell of a lot of trouble for you—”

“This isn’t a false report, goddamn it! Clean the wax out of your ears! You’re no fuckin’ idiot, Treadwell, I know you can smell what’s right under your nose. You know they’re dirty as flies on shit, now it’s time that you finally do something about it. You like the ocean?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I plan on going again with the wife soon... when you’re in the water, sometimes it’s nice to just relax and go with the flow. It’s less stressful, easier on your body and mind. But eventually, if you don’t start pushing against it, you’ll get sucked down by the undertow. Swallowed up until you’re no longer able to separate it... until you’ve become part of it...”

“Why don’t you just tell me your name and then I’ll go check it out?”

“Just do the right thing, Treadwell. You already know who I am, I’m just another doormat. The nobody who killed a lot of somebodies.”

Oliver hung up the phone and made his way back to the car. He started her up while trying to mentally prepare himself for war. He’d need to ready himself for a man that was more sinful and savage than the disturbed pack of wolves that he’d already snuffed out. It was time to go toe to toe with Damien Sanchez.

At least I got the jump on him, Oliver reassured himself as he pulled down a watery backstreet. *Sick fuck doesn’t know what’s coming, but he gonna find out soon—*Oliver’s thoughts were interrupted by a mixture of blue and red lights melting inside the liquid wave on the rear windshield. He heard the sirens next and carefully pulled his car over to the curb.

His heart was ready to burst out of his ribcage. The guns were in the trunk along with his dead wife... He looked at himself quickly in the mirror; thankfully, the rain had washed most of the blood off of him but he still looked like a wet pile

of shit. As Oliver watched the officer begin to approach his car, he realized that he had no other choice but to remain calm and try to play it cool.

As Oliver rolled down the window, the stun gun rushed through in a flash and pinched onto the fat that layered over his jugular vein. The amount of voltage the shock contained surely wasn't police-grade as it left Oliver instantly unconscious and slumped over in his seat.

He held it on him for another couple of minutes and watched his lard jiggle and tremor, ensuring that he would remain docile for at least a few more moments. It was also possible Officer Price was also just another disturbed sadist like many of his peers.

As Oliver frothed at the mouth, Officer Winston Price rushed back to his car and turned both the lights and ignition off. Officer Price tightened a pair of metallic handcuffs around Oliver's wrists and slid his obese body into the passenger seat. He slammed his foot down on the gas and took off into the rainfall.

BLACK MASS



Damien stood at the altar, chanting mindlessly with his eyelids shut tight. Damien thought that if he focused enough, he knew the white man who had caused him so many headaches and cost him additional earnings would be arriving soon. His inner demons would hypnotize his weak soul and draw him in if the hands of his followers couldn't.

Jennacide was a short distance away, laying out thick stacks of cash over the velvet cloth in front of him. The blood money felt haunted; if one listened close enough, the shrieks of the dead that had caused it to manifest could be heard groaning faintly. The innumerable trapped ghosts were merely bargaining chips that served to elevate Damien's carnal status. They'd made him God-like.

"Mark me now," Damien commanded her.

"But he hasn't been eliminated yet, master, you haven't ever
—"

"Silence! I've examined the fabric of this man. He is a mouse, afraid of his own shadow, a coward. That feeble-

minded fool will be boiling until his meat falls off his bones. We shall consume him during the Black Mass and absorb the souls he's taken from us before the night's end. We shall repossess the darkness of our street soldiers. It is our destiny. It is his destiny. It is inescapable."

"Of course, master," Jennacide complied despite her initial apprehension. She turned her sights from the cash and extracted the black tattoo ink and needle from a cabinet that sat a few feet away.

It didn't take long for her to add the prophetic line into his flesh. As she finished etching the mark of murder, the door creaked open slowly. Officer Price dragged Oliver's hefty body into the room and sat his handcuffed arms up against the wall.

Officer Price turned around, flashing a dashing smile at them. "I did it, here he is, just like you wanted, alive and in the flesh."

"Very good, at least someone around here can follow directions..." Damien grumbled.

Jennacide put the needle and ink away and looked up at Damien, "How perfect, just in time."

"It was just dumb luck really. I showed up at the warehouse to get some pussy but there was none left. The girls and the boat... everything was gone, and Mooney and Briscoe are both dead. Yup, he's a real sick fucker, cut 'em up into pieces and shot one of 'em in the cock. Smartass here thought of just about everything. Everything except parking his car a little further away. I was just able to pick up his plates on the security footage. It was just a matter of going for a short drive after that. Well, I guess he's all yours now," Officer Price said, tossing the keys at Jennacide.

Oliver kept his eyes open ever so slightly; through his leafy lashes, he watched Officer Price's grin grow from ear to ear as he explained. *Cocksucker, something just told me back at the hospital that this wouldn't be the last I saw of him*, he thought.

“I had to drive his car here, so I’ll need a ride back, but those are the keys to his cuffs and his car. It’s parked in lot C.”

Jennacide caught the cluster of keys and nodded. Officer Price nodded back as if he was waiting for something.

“Well?” he asked.

“Well, what?” Damien replied.

“Where’s my fuckin’ money? I don’t just drive around kidnapping people out of the kindness of my heart.”

“Of course, how could I forget... Jenna, get him his precious paper please.”

“Right this way,” she said, waving him up to the ominous altar.

Bootsy’s drooping body was still hanging in the crucified position; he looked dead but it was hard to tell. Officer Price crinkled his brow, “Geez, what’d he do?”

Just as his question finished, the young boy came awake and let out an ear-ripping cry. The child’s shrill screech was like nails on a chalkboard out of nowhere and made Officer Price jump. He put his hands over his ears as the pitch only intensified, now sounding like a pig headed out to slaughter.

Damien’s urgency to extinguish the annoyances was evident as he chose the dual-sided ax from the wall beside him and used its razor rim to promptly lop the teenager’s head off. It thudded on the ground and then was promptly doused in a soupy reservoir of red that flowed freely from his exposed neck stump.

“Jesus Christ!” Officer Price yelled.

“No, but I can understand the confusion,” Damien replied, displaying a rare sneer toward the headless crucified boy. “Jenna, please do allow him a similar fate.”

Jennacide had been waiting for him to give the word, the money they’d laid out was all clearly for show. She pounced on Officer Price and sunk her razor-toothed fangs into his

throat. As he fell backwards, she bit down as hard as she could and snapped her head back. Parts of his vocal cords and thyroid gland intermingled in her jaws as his inner essence now competed with the flow of the crucified boy's speed bleeding.

Officer Price, gagging with one hand clasped over his exposed neck, used the other to reach for his gun. Damien raised the ax and buried it dead into his shoulder joint before he was able to pull it. As the muscle, veins, and bones parted swiftly, he rendered the officer's limb inoperable.

Damien raised and dropped the ax over and over. Wide gaping slashes tore through his police uniform; the red and blue mixing like the lights atop his squad car. The total dismemberment occurred in a matter of minutes. Officer Price now looked more like the primary ingredient for a hearty soup than a human being. The chunky and leaky mess that he left behind was scattered all over the altar floor and cold stone steps.

"Begin the boil with these parts, we shall feast on his misdeeds as well," Damien commanded as he gazed down upon the quaking bulky slabs.

What in God's name is he talking about? What could they be trying to boil us in? Oliver wondered. He discreetly looked around the room trying to make a quick assessment. His eyes found the fraying rope attached to the crank beside him and followed it up to the rafters. Sitting above the room's center, he took note of the gigantic iron pot.

"Yes, master," Jennacide complied.

"I will prepare Vassago and Lilith to join us in fornication, then we shall eat, be quick, my child."

"Yes, master," she quickly echoed again as he stepped out of the room.

Jennacide scrambled in a hurry, trying to appease the master. She moved to the center of the room approaching the large pentagram-shaped burner coils and activated the switch.

To her nervous dismay, nothing happened. When the coil got hot, it was obvious one could feel its radiant heat almost immediately.

“Fucking thing! Never wants to work when I need it to!” She flipped it on and off a few times to no avail.

Oliver watched her failure from a distance and carefully rolled on his knees while her back was still turned to him. She continued to tinker with the infernal device as Oliver, being sure not to make the slightest noise, finally found his footing. With his hands still cuffed firmly behind his waist, he blindly brushed into the wall, which was lined with Damien’s prized collection. The massive variety of brutal death-inducing instruments couldn’t have been more useful for what he had in mind.

“I don’t wanna hear his shit, please, God, just fucking turn this on already!” Jennacide pined.

The irony of her casually asking God for help after all she’d done was not lost on Oliver, but as the dagger’s handle found his palm, it couldn’t have been more insignificant. He quickly turned back to the strained rope and tried his best to help guide the blade onto it.

Jennacide fiddled with a bundle of wiring that was underneath the coil as she’d done in the past to try and troubleshoot the device. A spark left the bunch and the metal began to find heat just as she pulled her limb out from inside. As her arm hair singed, she yelped, “Ouch! That was close,” just before the absurdly heavy iron container crashed down on the back of her head.

The sheer density of the pot crushed her face immediately and erupted her brain out like a wave of projectile puke that was coming from her forehead. Her interior elements landed on the now hot coil and sizzled like a fresh burger hitting the grill as the quarter-ton cauldron pinned her slender body to the high-intensity heat. Her face and limbs began to bubble and eventually melt into a rosy peach liquid that oozed downward and puddled beneath the bright orange coil.

Oliver dashed toward the lower half of her body that was hanging off the gory grill. He knew time was of the essence and that he needed to secure the keys before Damien returned if he wanted to have a chance at killing him still.

He backed in strategically, keeping most of his weight forward so he didn't tip backwards and burn to the bone along with Jennacide. He could feel the lava-like heat on his fingers as he touched around her pockets. As a dribble of sweat leapt off his forehead, he could feel his fingers on warm metal.

Oliver quickly rolled forward onto the floor with his jingling freedom in hand. He knew there was no way that he could figure out which key was for the cuffs with his hands behind his back, so he maneuvered sideways and tried to tuck his legs into his chest as far as he could. Next, he pulled his arms underneath and tried to tactfully slide his heels under the handcuffs. It wasn't like the movies though and an out of shape slouch didn't have a shot at the trick.

With his hands still restricted he tried to blindly determine what key would set him free. Since the rest of the keys on the ring belonged to him it was easy to feel out the tiny one that wasn't like the others. Once he had his fingers pinched onto the cuff key he felt around for the hole. As the sweat continued to flow from his brow, by a stroke of sheer luck it landed. He twisted it with glee, finally releasing the restrictive steel from around his sorely indented wrists.

Just as the handcuffs were coming off, Damien returned to the hellish room. He was flanked by a massive pair of ebony multi-horned Boer goats that Oliver could only assume were Vassago and Lilith. Upon seeing Jennacide's sappy face and burning hair stuck to the auburn coil, he relinquished his grip on the leashes of his beasts.

"You cursed imbecile!" he screamed as his rage began to shine through.

Oliver gained his footing like his life depended on it and reached toward the wall of medieval melee weaponry. He pulled the sword off the hangers and the pointed tip

immediately burrowed onto the wooden floor. “Fuck, too heavy!” he cursed, quickly moving on as the goats started to charge him. They were too close to make a calculated decision, so he grabbed the closest defense—a serrated long knife.

Vassago plunged his front horn into Oliver’s gut and punctured him, leaving a wide gash across his stomach and sending him stumbling. As he shook off the cobwebs, he saw the horns headed for him again. If Vassago rammed him while he was down on one knee, the next blow could potentially be fatal. The blood-thirsty beast closed in on him at break-neck speed and just as the goat aligned his second headbutt, Oliver thrust the wide body of the blade upward, driving it from the bottom of its jowl all the way through its brain. The tip poked out slightly from the group of crooked horns as the beast began to stumble about.

“Lilith! Gore him!” Damien ordered, triggering the other obsidian Boer to accelerate like it was possessed.

As Vassago fell down to the floor, gushing and trembling like a machine that was malfunctioning, Oliver battled through the pain of his own ripped open abdomen and moved back to the wall. A fat wooden club that was host to a multitude of girthy rusted spikes that pointed in nearly every direction was the first thing he touched.

He got both hands around the base just as Lilith charged in. In a moment of cunning that was so uncommon in his life that it seemed miraculous, Oliver sidestepped the creature and it smashed its head into the stonewall behind him. Lilith, in a slight stupor, turned back only to be met with the vicious swing of the spiked metal.

The point landed in Lilith’s eye, causing her to shriek. When Oliver pulled the twisted tool away, it ripped off a sizable sheet of the animal’s facial tissue along with one of its rectangular pupils. Oliver kept a death stare locked on Damien as he continued to bash the stunned creature’s head. After a

couple more shots, the beast seemed overcome with both exhaustion and agony and dropped to the ground.

Oliver didn't pause his beating, he continued until Lilith's head was just a pile of bones, brains, and fragmented horns. As he looked up from the slop pool, he still couldn't tell if Damien was rattled or not. He had reason to be after the swift slaughter of his malevolent minions, but he still seemed quite composed.

"Sometimes you just have to complete certain tasks yourself I suppose," he grumbled with an eerie calm consuming him.

Damien calmly approached the wall and chose his own weapon. The lengthy and curled bullwhip was made out of skeletal remains. The fragmented backbones of the banished whom he'd sent spiraling into damnation were spaced every few inches on the crude construction. Their osseous matter had been refined to a point where just tapping your finger on it would open the skin.

Oliver was unsure how to approach him, and before he could decide, Damien was cocking the whip back. When he launched it forward, it was evident that he'd had some practice in using it previously. Damien's aim and accuracy saw the shellacked tip curl around the top of Oliver's spiked club gracefully. Then, with one fierce yank, Damien effortlessly disarmed him, sending the club flying into the wall at his back.

Panic entered Oliver; he knew that he needed another weapon fast but as he reached for a hatchet fixed a few yards away, the spinal whip was already en route again. The polished bone tore into Oliver's forearm and opened up a seven-inch stretch of skin. He quickly pulled his arm back and clamped down on the immediately oozing wound.

He took a step backward as the next blow gashed open from the center of his cheek to the corner of his mouth. The tear in the side of his face was so extensive that it left many of his back molars exposed like some kind of ghoulish permanent grimace. Oliver wasn't registering the slashes or pain yet because of the adrenaline surge but he knew they were there.

Feeling the chilly air on his back teeth was a highly abnormal sensation.

Not only did the whip serve him up lashes that cut deep, it felt like a punch in the face. As if he'd been struck by a top-ranked boxer's haymaker, Oliver flipped around and dropped belly-first onto the still-warm pile of policeman that was the evil Officer Price.

"This is for the trouble you've cost me!" Damien yelled, slashing downward and creating a laceration that stretched from Oliver's left shoulder to his ass crack. The vicious strike paralyzed him—no amount of adrenaline was going to mask the utter torment and deep sting of the meat-tearing attack.

"But I shall be repaid! Your demise will not only bring balance within me again but it will make me even more powerful!" Damien screamed.

Damien's tone was beginning to sound almost inhuman as he continued whipping Oliver's back, creating a new ribbon of bleeding beef with each successive windmill of the whip. As each new mark appeared, the bloody pool of lines was creating a puddle of sliced, matted fat and gore. Death rode the mess like a monkey on his back.

Oliver wanted to shout and cry out and beg him to stop but he wouldn't. Instead, he sank his split jaws upon the dismembered calf of Officer Price. With each strike, he grunted and buried his enamel deeper into the muscle until he felt his teeth grinding against bone. After everything he'd been through, he was going out like the man he'd become, not the coward he'd evolved from. He wasn't reverting back. He wasn't yellow anymore.

"I will consume the souls of the men you've taken from me! You will all serve me and you will all reinvigorate me!" Damien unleashed another trio of lashes upon his unmade back. He paused for a moment, a little gassed from the extraordinary beating he was laying down.

“Turn over, you fat pig! Turn over so I can watch you become the dark communion. Turn over and concede to your consumption...”

Oliver did as he was told and, at a snail’s pace, finally flipped himself over. He watched the hellish man that petrified the populous suddenly turn pale. The look on his face was more mortal and vulnerable than anyone had ever been known to project.

Suddenly, with Oliver positioning Officer Price’s revolver directly at his implanted horns and intimidating tattoos, Damien Sanchez didn’t seem invincible anymore. The character that he’d crafted and portrayed melted right off of his face the same as his minion, Jennacide, whose flesh he could still smell cooking on top of their gimmicky pentagram coil.

“Consume this,” Oliver said, pulling back on the trigger.

The power of the shot that went in through his auburn eye pushed through the forehead ejecting his previously submerged horn. The bone whip fell to the ground along with Damien. Oliver aligned the barrel with his mushy head and emptied the rest of the cylinder. The shots effectively deconstructed his entire face.

The hot lead blasted apart his evil intentions, leaving his living characterization of the Prince of Darkness looking nothing like petrifying royalty. He was now just another peasant left to pass on in a lonely, pathetic fashion.

Oliver took a moment to admire the destruction he’d created. In the pulverized slop of sinew that was now the head of Damien Sanchez, he saw the faces of his victims blowing him kisses. The devil, or the man who believed he was, had been sent back to hell, right where he belonged.

He could feel the life oozing out of his many injuries as he laid his head back. He could feel his body slowing down and the adrenaline drip starting to dry up. He fell flat on his back and tilted his head back slightly. From an upside-down vantage point, he could see the many fat stacks of money

laying on the demonic altar. *It's always all about the fuckin' money... Every time*, he thought to himself somberly.

Without warning, a morbid sense of urgency came over him. The image of death's slender finger beckoning to him suddenly fueled him. He used what little strength remained in his upper body and dragged himself over to the unfastened handcuffs. His arm extended forward and he wrapped his shaking hand around his bloody keys.

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PROMOTION BY HOMICIDE



Treadwell stood in the stagnant basement of Pike Warehouse, which was now overrun with numerous detectives. The desecrated corpses of both Mooney and Briscoe were still confined to the cage and many unrecognizable bones and lifeless bodies occupied the firepit. The detective looked on at the heinous scene inquisitively, rubbing his chin stubble.

Detective Simms, one of the greener, unseasoned investigators approached him in a curious manner. “This is fuckin’ horrible,” he mumbled in disbelief.

“And it’s probably just the tip of the iceberg, kid,” Treadwell replied. He strolled over to another small curtained off area of the basement.

“You think that psycho on the phone did this?”

“That’s what he said.”

“But he also said that Mooney and Briscoe were running this operation. That these dead girls—”

“Would you put it past them?”

Detective Simms remained silent as Treadwell pushed the navy-blue curtain aside. Hidden behind were a few different flashbulb cameras and stacks upon stacks of pictures. The ones on top displayed mutilated girls, torture, sexual defilement, and many other gruesome scenarios.

“I guess maybe the silver lining in all of this should have you excited though,” Simms said.

“Excited?” Treadwell sounded almost offended.

“With Mooney and Briscoe gone, you’re the guy now. You just got promoted.”

“Anyone with a conscience wouldn’t wanna take over this fuckin’ mess. This is a PR nightmare.” Treadwell began to sift through the myriad of morbid photos on the table.

“So, you really think they did it? You think he was telling the truth?”

Detective Treadwell lifted up a black and white photo that pictured Captain Moody with a grin of profound pleasantry on his face. As Simms’s eyes wandered further down, he also saw his hardened pecker inside of an armless girl’s asshole.

“What do you think, Sherlock? I suppose that about says it all, doesn’t it?”

“I guess it does...” Detective Simms removed a lighter from his pocket and flicked it open, sparking the flame.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Treadwell asked.

“We can’t let this get out, it’ll ruin the whole department, this fuckin’ city will be in shambles. You want those goons running roughshod all over the streets? They’d take over everything.”

“What are you, fuckin’ blind, kid?! Take a look around, they already have...” He smacked the flame out of his hand and the fire fell dead on the floor. “And who the fuck are you to be calling shots? You’ve been around for a cup of coffee and think you found the answer? I can tell you the answer ain’t continuing this shit or covering it up, regardless of what those

maggots put in your head during training,” he said, pointing back to the grisly scene inside the cage. “It stops here, Simms, you fuckin’ understand me?”

“Yes, sir...”

Detective Treadwell turned to the rest of the personnel in the room and got his voice ready to boom. “I want everybody packing up, everyone get the fuck out now! Move now or lose your fuckin’ job!”

As the various people scurried out of the glowing crypt, Simms turned back to Treadwell, “Why, Max? Why you clearing everyone out?”

“Because I’m calling in the feds.”

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UNDYING LOVE



The thunderous pounding on Alejandro's door sounded threatening and aggressive. He palmed the shotgun and ejected the shell, putting one in the chamber. He crept toward the door and placed his eye against the peephole.

"Who the fuck is that?!" he barked, not seeing anything through the fishbowl glass.

He unlatched the door chain and leveled the gun, using extreme caution as he pulled the door open, unsure what would be on the other side.

To his amazement, on the doorstep laid a pile of money, the likes of which he could have only dreamed of. The blood that drenched the green bills didn't make it any less valuable, but it helped Alejandro understand its nature. He looked down at a bloody piece of paper that sat on the top of it all and picked it up. He unfolded it as carefully as he could, noticing that there was a message written on it in runny red that said:

**THANK YOU FOR THE GUNS THEY ARE
ALL DEAD NOW**

TAKE THIS MONEY AND HELP RAMON AND LET HIM KNOW THAT I FINALLY MADE IT BACK TO THE BEACH

Oliver barreled down the road with his foot pushing the accelerator to the floor. He could feel his brain losing the struggle to remain aware and awake. He could feel his body running dry of its mandatory internal lubricant. *You made it this far... Can't come up short now... Keep your eyes on the road... Keep pushing... Gotta stay awake...*

“Stay focused, baby, we’re almost there. It’s gonna be beautiful, just as beautiful as the first time we went,” Lydia said through her lipless smirk.

Oliver looked over at his beautiful bride who’d sat buckled into the passenger seat beside him. It hurt to smile at her but he did so anyway. Even though the split side of his cheek that faced her kind of looked like a permanent ghastly grin, he still wanted to put in the effort.

“What a lovely day,” Lydia remarked as the downpour only further intensified.

Oliver could see the peaceful waves only a short distance away. *So close... Just gotta keep my head up a few more seconds... I did it... The ocean water is right there... I can't believe we made it...*

Suddenly, Oliver crashed the front end of the car into an enormous boulder that sat beside a narrow dirt trail. His already deformed head smashed into the steering wheel at a rate that was concussion-worthy and his eyes started to close.

“Baby! Wake up! WAKE UP! We didn’t come all this way for nothing! Pick yourself up, mister, and let’s go see the water again!”

Lydia’s words prodded him and helped Oliver find a hidden strength that he wasn’t aware he housed. He unbuckled Lydia’s seatbelt and kicked open his door. When he tried to

grab a hold of her initially, he just pulled away clumps of decomposing spoiled meat and well-fed maggots. On the second time attempted, he made sure to clamp onto an area that had some solid bone underneath.

He pulled her stiff body through his driver's side door and hauled her down the short path until they were both at the cusp of the glorious soft sand. Oliver fell down and some of his intestines slipped out of his perforated belly. *Fuckin' goats, go figure*, he thought to himself.

He pushed his innards back into the hearty slit in his gut and found his feet again. He pulled Lydia back closer to the water amid the darkness of nightfall that still encompassed them. He felt the pouring rain almost patting him on the destroyed back in encouragement.

"You know why I always liked it here?" Lydia asked, sensing the nostalgic vibrations.

Oliver stopped dragging her when he was about ten yards away from the shoreline. He plopped down beside and beheld the comforting hypnotic waves as they crashed gently into the coast.

"Why's that?"

"Because no one else ever comes here. I mean, in all the years we've been coming, we haven't seen one soul. Whenever we come here together, I just feel like we're the last two people in the world. You're the only man for me. It's always been that way, I was just too stupid to see it. I love you more than anything. Kiss me, Ollie," she begged.

Oliver leaned in and used his hands to open her jaws. He stuck his tongue between her discolored teeth and felt the collection of slimy worms that had made a home where her tongue had once been. He continued passionately sliding his tongue into her before crashing down head-first into her lap a few seconds later.

"I love you too," he whispered.

HIGH TIDE



The next morning, the sun finally came out after months of unyielding rainfall and clouds. More comforting days were afoot. Oliver and Lydia remained on the beach, nestled in each other's arms for weeks. It was like a long overdue vacation had finally been granted by a higher power and they spent every moment of it together.

Side by side, they reminisced about all the other times they'd been there, all the little steps they took toward love before falling head over heels. They laughed and cried and remembered how that incredibly peaceful and serene place had brought them together.

The Stop N' Go didn't matter anymore; all those wretched bloodsuckers that fed off them were gone now. Even those terribly disheartening memories of the atrocities committed against them during that era seemed to have dried up in the sunshine too. All that remained was the good; all the countless things that they loved about one another.

As the days drew on, the crabs became curious. Before long, they felt adventurous enough to scale their corpses and break

bread with the myriad of bugs that were more than grateful to have their company. The hungry army of arachnids and intrusive insects tore off and consumed most of the rancid meat that clung to their exposed bones.

As their stained skeletons looked up at the all-healing sun showering what was left of them in comfort, some clouds began to manifest. When the evening finally rolled in, so did the storm.

The conditions became so overbearing that the ocean waves crashed out and pushed the tide much further than days past. The salty waters squirmed beneath Oliver and Lydia at first, but hours later, it had advanced behind them. The white sand below their bones moistened and solidified as the blue foamy waters pulled them away.

About The Author

Aron Beauregard



Private Dick(head) Aron Beauregard has always had a soft spot for bloody detective stories, horror and most importantly, tales of depraved revenge. So, he figured why not combine all three? He promised himself that before the devil dragged him down for the big sleep that he would write his revenge story. An ultra-violent, politically incorrect bloodbath that pays homage to his favorite revenge movies like the entire Charles

Bronson Deathwish franchise. One thing he never understood about those films was how in every movie Bronson's family would be raped and murdered in horrific fashion setting up the revenge sequence. They made five of them... wouldn't the next families looking to accept him be a tad wary? Maybe that's exactly the reason why he loves them so goddamn much.

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WHAT SECRETS LIE WITHIN THE FLESH? Brutus and Tommy pick up dead bodies for a living it's a grim but interesting business to, say the least. Their normally nasty gig suddenly transitions into something even more disturbing than usual when they pick up a recently murdered stiff that's been stewing in the blazing Arizona heat just a bit too long. They soon find out this isn't just any ordinary cadaver, this corpse has a dark, horrific secret... A shocking, repulsive, detail oriented odyssey that practically puts you on the coroner's cold definitive slab. You always hear that it's what's on the inside that counts and now it's time to find out. It's time to pick up the bodies...

[THE SLOB](#)

SOME STAINS DON'T COME OUT... Raised in a household so filthy it was stomach-spilling, Vera involuntarily evolved into a neat freak. Upon discovering she and her disabled husband Daniel are expecting, she needs fast cash. Her obsession with cleanliness sprouts the concept that her skills can be put to use in a unique way. She takes a stab at the booming door-to-door vacuum sales business of 1988. All is going well until she arrives at the steps of a house that will change her forever. The steps of an evil that resurrects the ghastly memories she so desperately tried to wash away. Nothing will prepare you for the nastiness, disorder and sickening horror brought forth by... The Slob.

SCARY BASTARD

BONES CRUSHED, PULLED OUT GUTS, CANDY AND HOMICIDAL NUTS! What do a brilliant child killer, a hopeful special effects artist, a duo of budding teen spree killers, a student-screwing teacher, and a mutated maniac missing his lower jaw have in common? They're all out this Halloween... How will their paths cross? Who will be butchered? Can anyone survive this bloodbath or are they all destined to drown in a pool of warm red? This slasher nightmare gives you a seat right beside the killer but don't get too comfortable, there's a Scary Bastard on the loose...

PIZZA FACE

GET YOUR SLICE OF THE PIE BEFORE EVERYONE DIES! What if you were the cock of the walk in high school? Worshipped by all for your flawless appearance and arrogant persona, until you woke up one morning to find that your once pristine skin had been stolen and replaced with a pus-oozing malformed flesh-scape? What if shadows were given a will of their own? What if the family dog stumbled upon a new class of bizarre and highly aggressive animals? What if there was a way to still physically be with a loved one after they passed

on? What if the plants around us found a different kind of solace in the affection we display? Find out the answers in Pizza Face.

DARK ASSEMBLY

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR DYSFUNCTION: This assembly of putrid tales will drag you into the darkest regions of humanity. It will push extremes and test the mental and moral boundaries of those who choose to participate. Meet a woman who carries a dead baby inside her womb and also the belief that her stillborn fetus will somehow find life again. Connect with a nomadic punk-rocker who's out to make a quick buck when he's presented with a sickening conundrum. Join two teenage psychopaths as they bring hell to the suburbs on Devil's Night. Follow a child of the streets who finally steered away from a life of crime only to be drawn back by a bizarre new drug. Take part in a gruesome and nefarious ritual that can restore one's innocence, or worm your way into the dark web beside a sadistic pedophile with a bottomless desire to kill and destroy. How should you feel after digesting these admittedly obscene and repulsive stories? Ask yourself if enjoying them makes you a horrible person or if hating them somehow justifies your journey into this storm of violence and perversion. For the sick and willing, please join in our Dark Assembly...

HALLUCINATIONS

THE MADNESS IS MELTING BUT WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR! In the grips of a bad trip, the hellish and overwhelming delusions are inescapable. Scarier than the overpowering visuals and boundless paranoia is the promise that there's no way out. Are you prepared to take that psychedelic pilgrimage? Are you ready to gaze upon an absurd growth that's gobbling up the entire world? Or take an unknown substance and hop on a private jet that spirals out of control? Would you let a young girl that spreads nasty rumors bend your ear to further her bizarre agenda? Are you willing to

be paralyzed and stuffed into a coffin that's ejected into outer space, or overdose and have your consciousness transferred into a disturbed bird? These experiences merely scratch the surface of the lives you're set to live should you agree to take the trip...

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