

Outside Looking In

He got me.

That fucker got me.

Right between the eyes too. I didn't expect him to be a perfect shot. I guess we all learn somethin'.

Look at him standin' there lookin' all smug. Bastard's lucky he got the jump on me, otherwise the whole situation woulda been ass-backwards.

Son of a *bitch*!

Now I'm never gonna know how that book ends. Had like five chapters left, *goddammit*!

I suppose I can't blame anyone in this situation 'cept myself. Shoulda been more aware. I knew this was comin' didn't I? You take forty thousand out from under the noses of a large (and extremely illegal) conglomerate an' they're gonna notice. Probably shouldn'ta gotten so greedy with my pickins. At least all that green tint's been flushed outta my vision with red...and grey.

Least I managed to spray the man. Look at 'im standin' there, fingerin' his jacket like he actually has somethin' to prove. Posh little fucker. Man what a face, keep on wrinkl'n it an' you're face'll look like a dryer in action. Probably just pissed he got some of my synapse on his suede. Bet that's gonna cost 'im a lot. Serves 'im right.

Hey, that's not fair of me to say.

I remember when I was like that. Preppy an' snide without a care in the world. Had two bags full of the rest of my life under each arm.

Everythin' smelled like money, the best part o' that meaning it could've smelt like anythin'. The scent of saltwater brine rollin' off the evenin' tropical sand, the sharp scent of new plastic off a freshly thrown poker chip, the oily surface of a new consort each an' every night, bathed in an ambiguity o' fruits and florals. No two are ever quite the same, but peaches n' pine were always my favourites. Oh, what? Each person has their tastes, an' I have mine. Damn, forgot how poetic money can make ya.

Now I'm just some poor sap who can't rhyme a single word, with a hole in his head the same size as his honest hard-earned savings to boot, which probably makes me even poorer now that I think about it, if I even am thinkin'. What'll they put me in? This fuck's likely gonna raid my drawers, takin' every last bobble an' profitable eye-candy I own. I'm gonna be buried in that stupid Hawaiian shirt I always wore to those social things, aren't I? Hell, it got me attention that's for sure. Doubt this fine gentleman'd want that.

I'll be damned if the satin linin' ain't gonna be the only pretty thing in that wooden box.

Unless they go south with that idea, skip the funeral, and just throw me in a ditch somewhere, dressed in batters n' bruises from the elegant journey in the back of an old beat-up's trunk. Bet I won't even be buried, just dumped off like some negligent teen mom's first mistake.

Oh, there he goes, off to explore. Ten bucks says he'll raid the pantry too. Wouldn't put it past him. That's what I did. Never could make an excuse for those extra ticks on the scale. Damn, maybe that's why they all stared at those social thingies. Christ, if that's the case, fork over the Hawaiian shirt.

Oh, he's back. Let's see what he swept u—

No. Not that, anything but...*shit*.

Should've guessed that woulda been the first thing to go. Not that she needs 'em anymore anyway, or would want 'em. I waited outside the store in the freezing cold for that thing for two hours. I remember askin' her why she had to be born in the middle of winter. That was back when she used to laugh.

I can still remember them sting when she tossed them at my face, going off on me about my late night escapades, this o' course bein' after I started my associations with the ones who just put a diminutive cylinder of lead through my skull. Even when she was chewin' me out, every corner of her face was like those diamonds, dangling from her ears, swaying with even the slightest tilt of her head. But there was a shine there. That was unmistakable.

I must be been ten kinds o' stupid to want to risk that. What the hell am I tryin' to deny? I *was*. Past her, I didn't need anymore.

Christ.

That sting didn't even come close to the one she must've had. Enough of a man to get fed up with her spewin' all the (absolutely true) bullshit, but not enough to accept my own faults. My snarl fallin' when she did. The smack of her chin echoin' off the tiled counter. She's gonna wear that for the rest o' her life.

Thank God I let her leave. Don't know what woulda come of either of us if she'd o' stayed. Probably woulda had to come home to this awful site. She always did like this carpet. No amount of stain remover'll do this rug justice now.

Wonder if this piss stain's got anyone special at home. Lookin' at those jewels pretty hard. Seems pleased with himself. He has to have someone. Gonna go home an' brag he poured out all his "hard-earned wages" onto those little things. Leavin' out the cold-blooded act o' murder o' course.

You best treat her right you snipe-nosed little bastard. You keep her outta all this.

Fuck *me*. This whole afterlife is sure takin' its sweet time. Can only take so much o' reflectin' on past transgressions. I ain't—or I guess I *wasn't*—much of a church-goin' fella. After all o' this I sure as shit won't be getting past those golden gates. Wonder if they got an AC down there?

You idjit. Did the small dose o' scripture that streetside pastor keep shoutin' at ya on yer way to the park ever teach you anythin'? Those flames are gonna eatcha. They're gonna tear you to bloody pieces an' hurl you back up and suckle on whatever sludge is left. And you earned that. Just like this shitter in front o' ya. Take a real good look at this picture.

You raided a man's house just like this. Followed the big man's words without any sort of restraint or protest. Like his dog. You were his well-paid, well-dressed mutt in a goddamn gold collar. An' you did exactly what he did. You went into his home, didn't know if he had a wife, or even kids. And you sic'd him. You sic'd him boy. Good fucking dog.

An' here I am havin' never believed in self-fulfilling prophecy. Irony is a witty little bitch. An' I'm the sucker. Plastic-wrapped and ready for purchase.

Enjoy this moment as much as your bread-n'-butter'll take to those rocks, mincemeat. Just pray that you don't go down the same way I did. The world's a lot less colourful from this angle.