

-SYLVIA-

We leave the clinic into the snowfall.

Oh, poor Lori.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving and I don't have any plans.

"I don't know if I should tell Johnny that I did it or not."

I hug her in close, giving her a bit of a cuddling shake.

There is a scary protester with a sign, an angry gray-haired man in dark shades. He shakes his sign at us, it's a gross dead fetus in a jar.

"Abortion is murder! You're a murderer! Jezebel!"

"Eat a dick, man!" I yell at him.

We walk away. I'm flipping the protester off while a cop eases him back into place.

"Don't worry about Johnny. He's too busy wrestling to ever care. This will just be our secret."

"I feel sick, Sylvia."

"Does it hurt?"

"A little."

I walk with her down this snowy, cold street and the tall buildings, the reflections of the windows. Everything is some shade of gray. I have no opinion on abortion. It hasn't happened to me so I don't have any real leanings either way.

What I do know is that Lori is not ready for a baby.

"Do you think it would have had my face?"

"Don't do this, Lori. You've done what you had to do. Lets move forward."

"Where did you get the money for this?"

I got it from studding out dogs so that they could get pregnant. The irony just hit me.

"Don't worry about the money. I just wanted to help."

I NEVER let a guy do anything to me if he doesn't have a condom. True, that's only three guys, but none were permitted entry without protection. I hate gross, slimy man juice.

I walk her to a corner cafe and we sit down. She doesn't talk. The whole time she's waiting for coffee she doesn't say anything. When her coffee arrives she just sits there stirring it. There's not even any sugar in it. She just stirs it.

"My dad's whole side of the family is in town and I haven't seen some of them since I was ten. I can't even remember some of their names."

I want to ask her what it was like, even though I already know the answer; horrible. She only found out about it yesterday, and here we are sitting and staring at coffee. The only ones who know about this are me her and the people at the clinic.

"Sylvia, I need you to come to Thanksgiving dinner with me. I can't do this alone."

I've been cutting out on mom a lot recently. She's starting to get worried. There's something really scared recently in her. She's worried about her leg, says it goes numb a lot. I'm pretty sure it's nothing, though. Still, I don't know if I should leave her alone on Thanksgiving. I also can't leave Lori alone either. She will not be able to keep it together. I'm really screwed here. I can't answer her. I've got nothing. Shit.

"Lake of fire" from Nirvana unplugged is playing overhead. I fucking love this song.

Thanksgiving.
Thanks. Giving.

It's a miserable dreary, snowy day at the beginning of a long and bitter winter. That doesn't stop people from smiling in big family bunches, here for the holidays. Everyone is happy but us. My best friend just had an abortion. My mom hasn't moved from a couch in months. I empty her fucking bedpans and I bag her fucking cigarettes and pretend I don't smell of it. I love Arthur. Arthur doesn't love me.

They call it Thanksgiving.

"I can't take it anymore, Sylvia."

She pushes the spoon down and the cup spills over. The hot coffee spills toward the edge of the table. I quickly lay down napkins to stop it. She's crying now, and not softly, either. She lets out a deep, quaking moan.

"My baby is gone."

Without thinking I get up and sit next to her.

“Is she OK?” the guy behind the counter asks. I don’t acknowledge him. I put my arms around Lori and hold on tight.

She was not ready. She made the right choice.

“It wasn’t your baby. It was just your pregnancy.”

“I don’t even know if it was a boy or a girl!”

“You made the right choice, Lori.”

“Mom. Mom. I’m so sorry, mommy.”

She wanted to do it. She was determined. She was scared to death. I didn’t talk her into anything. Now I know why. She had to get it over with. She had to do it before she had time to think about it. Even though she’s right she still has to live with it.

-DAVE-

The tapestry is bidding at \$500,000. The Victorian cabinet set is at a million.

A million fucking dollars.

They keep going up. I can't believe it. I filled the room with treasure I could not comprehend..

With my head in my left hand I take another drink of red wine.

I look at this antique site; I am dizzy with disbelief. This is one-thirty in the morning how long have I been here doing this? Eight hours? I can't pull away.

It's exhilarating and it's terrifying. All the money is dirty. All of it traces back to stolen goods.

This isn't the pawnshop. This is way-way-way out of my league.

Now I have to trust Arthur. He has to trust me. The account that we opened over seas to hold the profit. All three of us will get a share. We hope. It's a big pile, and greed can get anybody.

Dave, Sylvia, Arthur.

We're about to become millionaires. OK, two of us will. Rich boy is already up there.

The money is taken care of. Everything sold will go into the off-shore account. From that master account the money will be moved via computer transaction into domestic stocks and bonds, and then sold in three even shares to our accounts. I have about \$20 million of antiques back here. In one month it will turn me into a swiss millionaire.

What in the world is Sylvia going to do with seven mil?

Hell, what will I do with it?

I never wanted to be a millionaire. I was actually thinking that some day I'd open a hardware store or something. Now I can buy one. Now I can buy thirty!

I'm not happy about it now. I'm scared to death. I'm going to stay with it. This one is for the three of us, this is my part of the job. The numbers keep on going up each time I reload the page.

-ARTHUR-

The bag I take into the warehouse parking lot has a stack of bills in it so thick, that even without the taped newspaper wrapping it was still the size of a lunch box. I had a dickens of a time moving it out of the banks too. It took about the last 5 days to move the bill bundles out discreetly. It's fifty grand. Thank god it stopped snowing. The ground is now just cold and wet.

It's the very-late graveyard shift when I walk up to the security guard. He's already killed the security feed, and he did the same for Dave the night he came.

"What are your plans?" I ask him.

"I was thinking Cancoon would be a fun place to kick back."

"Good luck, man."

I leave him the bag, and head back to my Audi which I deliberately parked in the shadows behind some brush and open the trunk. I grab my red duffel bag. Inside I've got rubber gloves, a caulking gun, and five long tubes filled with a Vaseline/gasoline mix. I've got quick burning fuse, hobby clay, scissors, and a radio controlled rocket kit. All it took was one visit to a hardware store, and a quick swing by a hobby shop.

I walk back to the security booth.

"You have a great trip in Cancoon, Mr. Phillip Aaron Ferguson of 12 Maple way. Don't go anywhere until I come back. Mr. Curosa's associates are all here with me, and we are keeping an eye on you.

His eyes go wide.

"I'll stick around."

I walk to the warehouse, and unlock the gate. Inside, I shut the door, flick on my flashlight, and get to work. A quck glance lets me see that Dave did indeed leave behind some of the artifacts. Strewn place to place are larger metal and clay sculptures, a few of the guns and swords that I had him leave behind. All the wood is gone, and for good reason. All goes well there will be nothing left.

Neither Dave nor Sylvia know about this part of the plan. They don't know about the gasoline, or the second key I had made. They don't know that my plan includes arson.

I set to work inside. I go at the drywall around the electrical outlet, push in my caulking gun and inject about half a tube of napalm. I select another spot on the wall, trying to eyeball where the fire would spread from the socket, I inject the rest of the tube, and change out. I do the same with the four remaining tubes. With the tubes empty I string lengths of fuse from one hole in the wall to the next. I'm pretty sure that from the outlet, the fire will work toward the back of the room, away from the gate.

It has to look like an electrical fire. At least that's how it needs to look for now. When I'm done stringing the fuse from hole to hole I make one long strand of fuse and put it in the hole by the outlet. I walk over to the other side of the warehouse with this long strand still sticking in the wall on the other side of the room. Here I tie the fuse off to the rocket motor, which I stick on the ground pointing straight up using some clay. I set the remote fuse with a big 12-volt battery that should stay working for two days. That's it. I'm done.

I wrap up my gloves and my gear, and close up shop. It took less than 15 minutes from when I opened the gate to when I closed it.

Getting back to the security booth I see the security guard looking around the corner, in a sneaking posture. I pull out the gun, and fire into the air. It's loud and gets his attention immediately.

"Going somewhere?"

He turns, and it jumps him when he sees the sleek metal of the 45 pointed at him.

"Whoa, whoa! Easy man."

"Don't fuck with us, Philip. Mr. Curosa is a very powerful man."

I signal him back into his seat with my gun. He does just that, sitting down at the booth, and I look to see that the security cameras are still off.

"You're holding up your end, correct?"

"Yeah, man, Yeah. I'm not fucking you."

"Damn straight. We've been very good to you, Phillip. Return the favor, OK?"

"Yeah. I will. I do. I swear to God."

I put my gun back into my pocket.

"You've got the money you want, you've got a great vacation to look forward to, far away

from the gray and cold of this place. Take care of yourself, OK?"

"I will. I promise."

With my eyes slim for intimidation I walk back to my car and speed off. Putting the gun in the glove compartment, I smile. I have the launcher for the rocket in there too. Tomorrow is thanksgiving. I'm going to eat Turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy, and I'm going to fall asleep on the couch. Then I'm going to wake up, drive back here, press a button and burn the motherfucker to the ground.

Send questions, Comments, thoughts to

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