

-SYLVIA-

Next of Kin.

That's me.

Now she's out of my life and I don't have to take care of her. Now I'm all on my own

I don't have anywhere to go, because I can't go back. There's no point. I'm sitting in this hospital lounge, and feeling just about as hollow, miserable and confused as I can remember.

I just had a long talk with a man about funeral arrangements. Whether there is a plot. What will be done with the remains. Is there a will? Then, of course, paying for the hospital stay.

Dave sits in the chair across from me. I'm on the big brown leather couch in the lobby. There is a quiet drone of overhead florescent light. He's got nothing to say. He looks at me with wayward glances.

I'm going to have her cremated. I throw the ashes in the river. I don't want an urn. I want a shoe box. I just want to get it over with.

She raised me for seventeen years. I took care of her for just one and now she's dead.

Oh, my God. My mother is dead.

"Dave." I call him over.

"Yeah, Sylvia?"

"Can I stay at your place for a little while?"

"My place? In the Ghetto?"

"I don't want to go back to that apartment."

"All of your stuff is there."

"Yeah. I'm going to collect it all, then I'm going to leave that place behind."

I don't know why I'm doing this. I have no other place to go.

He sits down next to me but does not look at me.

"So this is what happens when you pray, huh? Your God does the exact opposite of what you

ask him for?"

"What did you ask him for?"

"I wanted my mother to live." Fuck. I'm starting to cry again.

"Life doesn't end, Sylvia. Life goes on. That's what the resurrection means."

"Shut up. Just shut up." I tell him.

I close my eyes and bunch up my knees to my chest. I just can't listen to any religious bullshit right now.

-DAVE-

I keep telling myself what I remember from Sunday school a long time ago.

If God exists, then why do bad things happen to good people?

Because God knows that how good people respond to bad things is what makes them good people.

In the face of tragedy works the hand of God.

How can I respond? What makes me good?

That is the nagging question. That's what's breaking me in two about this.

Are we really good people?

What do I really feel for Sylvia? What is she to me really? What can I possibly do that could stop her from crying?

Am I good enough for that?

-ARTHUR-

When I enter the hospital lobby I see the two of them on the opposite side. Dave taps Sylvia and points to me. I wave. Sylvia goes from a curled up ball on the leather sofa into a straight stand and she walks away very quickly. With about that same speed Dave gets up and he approaches me.

"What? So she didn't want to see me?"

"She just needs some time alone. Do you still have the gun I lent you?"

"Oh. Oh." I say "The gun you lent to me? Is that how it happened?"

"Yeah. OK. The gun I tried to shoot you in the face with. Fine. I'm sorry. Do you have it?"

"Yes. Actually, I do. I keep it in my glove box in the car."

"Alright. Well, I need it."

This is not the place. People are trying to get in and out of here, and were in the middle of the foyer entryway, talking about a gun. It's late, but it's a hospital. I nod to a nurse as she leaves the building, undoing her hair. There is a TV in the corner of the lobby and I move Ken towards it.

Just as I had hoped, the news is on.

"What do you need the gun for?"

"It's not for me. It's for Sylvia."

"What? What the fuck? You're not gonna kill her!"

"No. No. Fuck you. She wants to move into my place, and I want her to have it for protection."

"What? She does not want to move in with you!"

"Hey, look, don't ask me. She just said she wants to stay in some place away from her old apartment. I want her to have some protection, though, if she's going to stay with me."

I look at the screen and they've cut to a live helicopter shot of the fire. It's huge. It's

beautiful.

"How do you want it?" I ask.

"You know. Loaded. Safe."

"Take a look at that, Ken."

He looks at the screen, but doesn't much react.

"Yeah. That's a fire. So?"

"You know where that is?"

"I don't know." He says "Somewhere across town?"

I smile "That is the old man's warehouse."

"You mean Marvin Curosa?" I smile, raise my eyebrows "His warehouse? How do you know?"

"I know because I was just there."

He stops. He looks back at the TV and stares. The fire billows out and in. The fire becomes pitch black smoke almost as quickly as it can bloom. There is just that constant Orange halo of fire above the building. It just burns and eats the building whole.

He looks over at me. It dawns on him. His eyes widen.

"You did that!"

"I did that."

He looks back at the screen.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"Well, Ken, here is the deal. I for a long time have wanted to take over my father's insurance company."

Boom. On screen one of the warehouses explodes in a brilliant white flash.

"Well, I didn't do that." I say, turning up the volume of the TV.

"As we had feared the combustible materials the firefighters could not reach because of the blaze appears to have exploded. Now we have at this time numerous reports that the fires may threaten the nearby fuel depot. No word as yet as to how long the fire is expected to burn."

I mute the TV.

"Like I was saying. I wanted to take over my Father's company, so I arranged for the destruction of most of his assets. Or, the appearance of it, anyway."

Dave starts leaning back and forth. It looks like he's getting a little bit woozey. I walk him out of the lobby, away from the live report of the fire. As we head out to my car, he pushes me off of him, and goes to sit on a cement parking stop. He breathes in and out to gather himself.

"You never said anything about blowing shit up, or burning shit down."

"Don't be such a weakling, Dave. I thought you were a tough guy."

"Oh, God. Oh, my God."

"Come on, Dave, is there even anything you can do about it?"

"You never said anything about a fire!"

"Of course I didn't. I couldn't have you or Sylvia know my third of the plan. That's how it was supposed to work: She got us in, you stole the stuff and sold it off, and I covered our tracks. I couldn't have you knowing this part because I wasn't sure you would play ball if you knew I was going to burn the thing down."

I pick him up, and he's now solid on his feet. OK. I think he gets it now.

"What if we get found out?"

"Then we all go away for a long time."

"How did you do it?"

"Home-made napalm, and a remote detonator. I put the fuse for the primary near an electrical socket. To the investigation it will look like an electrical fire. For a while anyway. Long enough for my dad's stock to take a nose-dive. Let's go"

I tap him on his shoulder, and we walk. We get to my car and he goes into the passenger

side door and takes out the gun. With a quick check of the magazine he looks up at me.

"You know, I really wasn't going to kill you."

"Yeah. Sure."

"I couldn't do it. Thou shalt not kill."

"Alright, Dave. Thanks for, you know, not having the guts."

"I was upset at you for a bit but I can live, I suppose, with one misstep in my heterosexual purity."

"Yeah, I liked it too."

"Shut the fuck up."

He slips the gun into his pocket. Deep into his skiing parka. We walk back to the lobby under the hot orange of the overhead lights of the stacked parking garage.

"What a life. People dying, fires, praying for help while we're off making millions."

"Dave, I think life is like a gem. You only see in it, what you see through it, and it all depends on how you look at it."

He stops me walking.

"Sylvia is still uneasy, Arthur, better save seeing her for sometime later."

"Can you have her call me?"

"What if the authorities find out that it's arson?"

"You see, they will. Just not before the insurance claim."

He shakes his head. "I just don't get it, man."

"Well, don't worry. I'm the brains of this outfit." With a wave to him I turn back for my car.

"You may be the brains, but you may be crazy."

"I'm not crazy. I'm just moody."

The Three Weasels 5-2

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