

ONE MORNING

The first time I heard the song “Stuck in the Middle with You” was in the car one morning, and we were on our way to bury the bodies of five dead hookers.

“Way to go, ya goddamn psycho,” John said to me as he passed. I didn’t bother to reply. It was early in the morning, right as the stars were disappearing. I was sitting on the bumper of John’s car, just about to zip up my coat. Danny was off wandering in front of me, pacing back and forth. The sound of the city waking up behind us made them nervous. Whatever we were going to do, we had to do it now.

“What’re we going to do?!” cried Danny. His hands were shaking uncontrollably and every time he spoke he had to bring his hand up to his mouth. Danny moaned. “This is all so fucked up,” he said under his breath.

“Take it easy, man. It’s all cool,” I said to him. It wasn’t exactly “all cool.” I was just making a futile attempt to throw water onto the fire.

“What is ‘all cool’?!” yelled Danny as he rushed towards me, his hand unsure of whether to make a fist or stick out its index finger so I could be scolded. Danny changed his mind how to begin his argument and yelled out, “There are five dead hookers in the back of that...!” John rushed up to Danny, shushing him to keep his voice down. Danny began again more quietly, “There are five dead hookers in the back of that warehouse, and you’re trying to tell me that everything is cool, man? You’re fucking out of your fucking mind.

That’s what you are, man.” He threw his hands up and walked away again. As if nothing had just happened in the past few moments, he went right back to where he was pacing and began to walk back and forth again. “This guy’s fucking out of his mind, man,” Danny repeated.

“Okay, okay,” said John, trying to calm Danny down. “We gotta get rid of the bodies...”

Danny immediately interjected, “What do you mean ‘we’?! I had nothing to do with this! *He’s* the one that went nuts!” Danny pointed to me, throwing his whole body into the motion.

“Look, man, I know, but we were all with them hookers, and they’re fucking dead now. Don’t you think this is the kinda shit that comes back to bite ya in the ass? Sooner or later they’s gonna find them bodies in there and we’re all gonna be fucked. We gotta get rid of them, ‘cause if there ain’t no bodies, there ain’t no crime, and most of all—there ain’t nobody responsible for their deaths. You get me?”

Danny just threw his arms up in the air and rolled his eyes. He went right back to his pacing, saying to himself, “What are we gonna do? What the fuck are we gonna do?”

“I’ll tell you what we’re gonna do. We’re gonna back my car up to the door and load the broads into the truck, then we’re gonna drive our asses out to the desert, and bury all of ‘em in a deep grave.”

"Oh, God... Oh, God..." At that, Danny was really starting to lose it. "How are we gonna get those... Oh, God..."

"What's the problem, man?" asked John. "This is perfect. It's simple. It'll work fine."

Danny yelled, "The problem is they ain't gonna fit into your trunk, man! There's fuckin' five a them!"

"We'll just cut 'em up."

"What?! Are you out of your fuckin' mind too, man?! They're not just a bunch of fuckin' meat!"

"It didn't look like you thought that *last night*," I said curtly.

Danny turned to me, whipping his head around so fast it seemed as though he could have broken his own neck. Rage was burning in his eyes like nothing I'd ever seen in him before. If I wasn't bigger than him, I'm sure he would have attempted to beat me to death right there. Instead, he restrained himself, yelling at the top of his lungs, "Shut the fuck up!"

"You sure know how to make a bad situation worse, don't you?" said John. "Come with me," he added. "You like this kind of shit, you sick fuck."

I looked up at him with my eyebrows cocked. I wasn't about to buy his bravado attitude. That pissed him off even more.

"Wipe that fuckin' look off your face and get the fuck off my car. You're gonna help me cut up the goddamn bodies."

"Oh, God..." repeated Danny, already getting back into his pacing.

"Come on!" John said to me one final time. I reluctantly got up. He opened the door to the abandoned warehouse and held it for me. He gave me a cold glare as I passed him, and he followed in behind me.

There they were, strung out on the floor the way I'd left them.

"I think they look prettier like this," I said with a smirk.

"You're such a sick fuck," said John, shaking his head in disgust. "Catch." He threw a fire ax in the air toward me. Fortunately I caught it. "If that thing would have split open your head, nothing else would have made me happier today."

"Okay, I get your point. You don't care for me."

"Don't care for you, man?" John said to me sarcastically. "I fuckin' hate you. In fact, after we get rid of these broads, I don't wanna ever fuckin' see you again. Now get to work. This is what you do best, isn't it?"

I rolled my eyes, and couldn't help but respond. "I can't say I won't enjoy it."

"Shut the fuck up and get to work already."

"And what are you gonna do? Stand and watch?"

"I'm gonna load the limbs and legs and shit into the trunk, smart ass."

I grabbed one of them by the leg and dragged her away from the others. Her name was Liberty, so she said. She was the best out of all of them. She was still wearing those sexy bellbottoms, but now they were soaked in blood. I extended her arm, brought back the ax, and threw it forward over my shoulder. The blade swiped through the arm, snapping through bone and slicing through ligaments, hitting against the hard cement floor. Blood splattered across the ground. John couldn't bear the sight. He gagged for a moment, trying to resist the urge, but he couldn't. He vomited right there in front of me.

"Fuckin' sick," he said, wiping his mouth with his sleeve. "I'm gonna step

outside. Tell me when you're finished." He rushed towards the door and quickly walked outside. For a brief moment, I could hear Danny nervously ask, "What happened in there?!" I couldn't hear John's reply.

I proceeded to cut off the rest of her appendages and then moved onto the others. They all bled just the same. It wasn't near as exciting as before, when I could hear their screams. The brunette, she screamed the loudest. I liked her.

When I was finished, I stepped back outside. John was saying to Danny, "I hate this city. When I get back to New York, I'm staying there for good. New York is the place, man. LA is fucked up." John and Danny just noticed me. My pants were covered in blood and I still held the ax.

"Oh my fucking Lord!" yelled Danny, shielding his eyes.

"Did you miss me?" I ask.

"Jesus Christ, man!" John jumped to his feet and rushed over to me, pushing me back into the warehouse. "Clean yourself off."

Something wasn't quite right with John. He smelled just like he did last night when we were... "Have you been smoking?"

"What the fuck do you care?"

"We've got shit to take care of," I said to him. "If you're high, you're gonna make this a bunch more difficult than it should be."

"Man, this is the least of your worries. I don't need shit from you right now. My nerves, man, they're fuckin' fried because of this shit. Just wipe yourself off and start loading this mess into my car."

"Are you gonna help?"

"Yeah, yeah... I'm okay now," he said as he leaned down to pick up a pair of severed arms. He gagged a bit, but he held it down this time, taking the arms out to his car. Bit by bit, we loaded everything into the trunk. With the last piece, John slammed the trunk down, but it didn't quite shut. "Shit," he said to himself.

Without hesitation, I jumped up to sit on it. It latched shut with a distinctive click.

"Oh, God!" yelled Danny. He pointed underneath the car. A stream of blood was flowing out from under the car. "I'm going! I'm getting the fuck out of here!" Danny wiped the sweat from his face with his shaking hand and began to hustle away. John ran after him. He grabbed Danny by the shoulders and turned him around, bringing him back to the car. "No, man. I'm not going. I'm not going, man."

"Come on. We'll need your help," replied John. "Come on, just get in the car. We're gettin' the hell outta here."

"Oh, man," I said, looking through the car's back window. Blood had soaked through the fabric and seeped out all over the backseat.

"Fuck!" yelled John as he looked in the car himself. He opened the passenger door for Danny, who was so thoroughly losing it at this point he was absolutely speechless. He kept staring straight ahead while John pushed him in the car and shut the door. John ran around to the driver's side. He reached for the door handle, but before he could open it, I grabbed his hand.

"You're not drivin'," I said.

He quickly pulled his hand away and yelled, "Don't you fuckin' touch me!"

"You're high, man! You're not drivin'!"

“The fuck if I ain’t! You just like to fuck things up, and I ain’t gonna let you fuck this up, not when we’re getting’ ready to get this shit straightened out. Get your ass in the back, you psychotic fuck. Your clothes are drenched in blood anyway.” He opened the car door. I didn’t bother to grab him this time. I just got in the back like he said. I didn’t give a damn at this point.

As I put my weight on the cushions, even more blood gushed out from the seat, pooling onto the floor. John started up the car and drove off, paying no attention to me, not even looking in his rearview mirror because he knew he would see my face, the face that he had so passionately grown to hate.

On the interstate, John’s car didn’t perform like it used to. The weight in the trunk made the back of the car sink so much that the bumper was nearly scratching the pavement. Cars were passing us on the left and right, the people inside looking in at us, trying to see why the hell we were going so slow. Getting a glimpse of our faces didn’t give them any answers. Danny was nearly catatonic, John was trying to hold onto the steering wheel, trying to keep the car straight and his eyes open at the same time,

and me—I was soaked in blood and smiling at anyone who was brave enough to look me in the eye.

I got up and leaned up to the front to turn on the radio. “Man! What the fuck are you doing?!” yelled John.

“We need some music in here,” I said. And there it was, that song, “Stuck in the Middle with You.” John was far too busy hitting me with his forearm to see the irony that I saw. I laughed and sank back into the pool of blood that was making its way towards the front of the car.

“Ah, shit, man! You got blood on my seat!” John yelled. He looked back over his shoulder to see the bloody handprint that I had left. He was quickly distracted, though. He felt something wet making its way through his shoe. He looked down to see blood all over everything. He jumped at the sight, and the car swerved out of its lane and into the cement wall on the side of the road.

When I came to, my broken body was leaning up against the smashed back door. John and Danny were both dead, and me—I was still laughing, almost as though I had never stopped.

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