

SLAYING A GOD

A red bird lands on a highline within the view of my scope. It twitches its neck, looking in several different directions in less than a couple of seconds. It's so red, like it had been dipped in a pool of thick, rich blood. It wouldn't care if that were actually the case. It's completely oblivious. I want to kill it just for that. I imagine a bullet from my gun sweeping through the crisp, cold air. It would bloom like a flower, its petals of sharp metal grinding through bones and feathers, beaks and claws.

I'm getting distracted.

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"It's a Walther," I said, the rifle resting close to my chest, "the best sniper rifle ever made."

"The best?" Carl asked, sitting across from me in the small living room that just barely existed in my apartment.

"The best," I confirmed.

"How much did you pay for this thing?"

I smirked and just slid my hand down the metal of the gun barrel.

A disapproving look came about his face. "You didn't."

I maintained my smirk. He was right. Did he actually think I could afford a firearm, or even get one with my record? I hadn't exactly paid for the gun. But I felt that gun belonged in my hands, no matter what I did to get a hold of it. I was born to hold that beautiful thing.

"How much is it worth?" he asked.

"More than the two of our lives combined..."

"Which is pretty much every item ever made," he interjected.

"...plus a new sports car."

"Oh my god. I don't want to know this."

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Everything is a target. My crosshairs hover across the ground, back and forth, until they occasionally stop at a lone bird sitting on some branch or highline, or some oblivious, passing pedestrian. When you hold in your hand a hammer, everything is a nail.

The cold is starting to bite through my gloves. The wind is nonexistent, fortunately. Even a small breeze would have made the crumbling rooftop unbearably freezing—not to mention the fact that my bullet might miss its target. I only get one shot at this, literally. As soon as this trigger is pulled, they're going to hunt me down like a animal. I'll be public enemy number one in their eyes, but I'll be long gone.

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I took a bite out of my sandwich. I didn't chew, instead letting the food splat back on the table.. Food had started to lose its taste. It didn't need any analyzing. I knew why. It was because I always watched the slanted news when I ate.

“House Majority Leader Richard Green denied the allegations that he made large, illegal contributions to the campaigns of hundreds of currently elected representatives of his own party, citing dirty politics on behalf of the Democrats.”

A piece of lettuce fell from my sandwich to the floor. I kicked it into the corner where all my other garbage was piled. The landlady says there’s a nasty smell coming from my place, but I don’t listen to a word that comes out of that hag’s mouth, because she’s a fucking fascist liar.

Footage from a press conference showed Green saying, “The allegations are frivolous.”

“Dirty politics? It just so happens that the poster child of dirty politics is also the epitome of hypocrisy,” I said, setting my tasteless sandwich down for good. “Who would have guessed?”

“Why is that making the news?” Carl asked. Carl, my upstairs neighbor, sat across from me at the dinner table, watching the television set and munching on his sandwich at the same time. “He’s had his hands in deals far more corrupt than that. But they don’t even give mention to them. Hell, they didn’t even offer the truth to the ‘allegations’—they just gave Green a soapbox to make us believe everything we know isn’t true. Do they think we’re that stupid?”

“We are that stupid. We are that gullible. Before they would pull the wool over our eyes and do all the nasty things they wanted to do behind our backs. Now, they don’t even have to do that. Every day I watch the news, every day I hear the lies, and the only thing that is keeping me from believing them are my two eyes. The truth is so obvious to me and you and to all enlightened people out there, but for every

one of us, there’s one of them. You know? Like the rural Wal-Mart employee that sits around watching Fox News and praying to God the Republicans win so that they can finally be safe from the towel-headed bastards who’ve got their sights set on crashing a 747 into their house, which sits in the middle of Bumfuck, Nebraska! They’re uncultured, uneducated fools that don’t know that another, untwisted reality sits beyond their doorstep.”

He laughed like he always did. It was all so absurd, everything on the TV, you couldn’t help but laugh. “I hear ya.”

A fly landed on my neck. I slapped it as hard as I could. “Fuck you! Fly fuck!” I wiped his guts on my torn, stained pants. “Goddamn flies.” Carl didn’t even flinch, mesmerized by the television. “I think we’re due for another assassination,” I said in all seriousness, meaning to break his concentration.

He laughed again. “I’ll drink to that.”

“No, I’m serious.”

That’s when Carl stopped trusting me.

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The hotel is already filled with swindling aristocrats, CEO’s of the largest, most corrupt, most powerful corporations, all waiting to shake hands with the man that’s been their lapdog for so many countless years. The American corporation and the American politician have this symbiotic relationship, each keeping the other in power, acting as a virus, feeding off the weak and the poor and the helpless.

I knew Green would step out of his limousine at the doorstep of the hotel among a horde of Secret Service agents, his

minions, right in front of the hotel's doors. One would open the door as others create a wall of men, all protecting what they truly believed was a great asset to this country: House Majority Leader Richard Green. They've sworn that they would give their lives for him, and I lie here on the roof to make sure they did just that. I'll shoot through any one of them if I have to.

Randomly Green would wave to some idiot in the building as if he actually knew them and put on a fake smile as he began to walk in, adjust his suit and tie maybe. Just as he's about to step into the hotel, that's when the lights would go out. A single bullet shot. A single bullet hit. Screams, crying, orders being barked into radios, people running away, pointing in every which direction that they think the shot was fired from, fleets of police flooding the area—mass confusion. I'd pick up my spent shell cartridge, throw my gun into my suitcase, and get the hell out of there. I'd lay low for a few days and then casually make my way back home. Mission accomplished.

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"You've taken this too far! I can't let you do this!" he yelled frantically, blocking the doorway to the outside world.

"You can't stop me. The time has come." I put my pistol in my side holster and slid my hunting knife into the sheath around my ankle. I couldn't have been more ready. I had even sewn up my least-torn shirt for this moment.

"God damn! We were just joking!"

I pulled out my rifle from its case and began to load the ammo.

"Look," he said, still trying to talk me out of what I was about to do, "both you and I know if anybody deserves to die it's

him, but killing him doesn't do us any good!"

"Whenever any form of government becomes destructive, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it."

"That's right, the people! Don't you see?! You're one man! One man!"

"And with a single shot, I'll be representing the people's will. Why don't you get this? When Green is dead, politicians will take notice. They'll change. They'll see what happens when they stop representing the people. They'll see that corruption is a death sentence and then wise the fuck up."

"You son of a bitch. If you kill him, you'll be just as big of monster as he is!"

"Enough!" I yelled. "The decision has been made. If you holler any louder you'll let the whole fucking tenement know what's about to happen."

"If you do this," he began. He had a hard time continuing. "I'll turn you in."

I rushed up to him and grabbed his face. My gripping hand squished his cheeks together. He looked like a terrified fish that had just been snagged from the pond. I whispered in an angry, growling voice, "We've been friends for a long hell of a time, and I never took you as one who would betray a friend. But if you do, I'll kill you just as I'm going to kill Green." I let him go, pushing him just hard enough so that he banged his head on the wall behind him. "Stand aside."

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I run through the assassination over and over again in my head. It's all I've been thinking about for the past few weeks. This one shot, this one chance. Anything could happen, anything could go wrong. I had to

be twenty steps ahead of myself to even have the slightest chance of pulling something like this off.

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He was dead, and I had killed him.

My gun was smoking. Shell casings lied on the floor next to me, far more than just one. One of those casings once contained a bullet that passed through Richard Green's skull. The others contained the bullets that pierced through civilian and Secret Service agent alike. I missed.

The panic that ensued after that first shot was fired made it almost impossible to find my target. My heart was pounding and my gun was shaking. There was no time to think, no time to weigh my options. I just fired, and fired, and fired, and at the last moment, I saw Richard Green's horrified face. He was lying on the ground amidst a pile of agents who had covered everything but his head.

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On the roof, I still wait patiently.

A limo pulls up to the hotel. I tighten my grip on the trigger. It doesn't look like Green's. No American flags were waving from the front of the car, no police cars leading and following, no Secret Service agents running alongside and pushing their earpieces further into their ears. A woman steps out instead. I relax my finger.

Along the sides of the red carpet she cockily struts down, dozens of news reporters are throwing their microphones over the shoulders of the police officers that kept them at bay. The camera men were behind them, jockeying for position. From

this far away they look like a riot of angry wolves, all fighting to be the alpha male. Whoever asked the question that could spark a response from one of the people they had deemed as important, whoever had the best angle on the news reporter who asked the question, whoever could get it out to their viewers first, whoever had the prettiest news anchor spin this putrid cesspool of scandalous corruption into a positive, pro-American, pro-capitalist story—that's who won.

My crosshairs float over to one of the reporters. In the midst of them, at the front of the pack, one of them wears a bright-red dress. She went coat-less to make her cleavage clearly visible. Those green eyes. That dyed, golden-blond hair. That bright lipstick. I recognize her. "Spin it. I want to watch you spin it." I whisper to her softly as though she can hear me from so far away. "What's the difference between spinning and lying?" She didn't answer. She couldn't. As it were, there wasn't a single member of the pack who actually possessed a soul. None of them could answer such a blatant question. A lie—it has an inescapable connotation that's negative to its core, but "spin"—the word is so harmless. After listening to your subliminal lectures, reality resembles a dream, the American dream, the dream you want us never to wake from. Go ahead. Assure us that the evil we see is there for the reason of the public's benefit.

Spin it for us.

Lie.

...

I kicked open my apartment door, panting uncontrollably. The briefcase with the rifle in it needed to be put away

immediately. It was over if anyone saw me with it. I pulled away the fabric on the back of my couch and jammed the case in between the framework tightly. Just as I stuck the fabric back in place, I caught something out of the corner of my eye. Someone had been watching me from the moment I stepped into my apartment. It was Carl, standing in the doorway.

"Jesus! You scared the shit out of me!" I yelled as I adjusted my couch back to its place. "Shut the door."

He stepped into the room, glaring an accusatory, disgusted look at me. "You shot him, didn't you?"

"Do you want me to lie to you?"

"There's no need." He closed the door. "I already know."

"Then why'd you ask?"

He walked over to the remote, picked it up and pointed it at the TV. It clicked on, the channel unchanged since yesterday's afternoon news. Today, they actually had something to report. The only emotion a newscaster possessed besides fake amusement was that of fake concern. Her eyebrows flared as she began to report the breaking news story, "We have just learned that among a number of government agents, House Majority Leader Richard Green has been shot." What was meant to be an assassination, they were calling the "Hotel Massacre." "We have exclusive footage of the brutal killing of these, beloved, American heroes as they protected a great leader of the American people." This was the media's attempt at being objective. They always failed miserably. "In this footage we are about to show you, people are getting killed. If there are small children in the room, you probably won't want them to see this."

Nothing was sacred.

The point of view had changed, but nothing else had. The video showed the hotel entrance, and there was Green, who stepped from his car and waved to the press when... The camera went blank after receiving a jolt from the jumpy cameraman. The first shot had been fired. Then another. It ripped through one of the Feds as they ran to secure Green. He was shot twice, and a third time. Another of them tackled Green and took him to the floor, getting shot in the back once and again in the head. A civilian, in a horrible attempt to run away, walked right into the gunfire, getting hit in the shoulder. Two others agents tried to grab Green and pull his shocked, motionless body into the hotel. One of them got his hand shot off while doing so. The rest of them finally had time to react, jumping on Green from every which direction. Did they secure him? Someone stepped in front of the camera and all you could see was blood spray from Green's head as the final shot was fired.

That was it—in its entirety. It was then time for the viewer to decide who was the bad guy. On one hand, they have perhaps the most corrupt man in the world, indirectly responsible for the death of millions across the globe. But they didn't see these deaths, nor did they see these peoples' cruel suffering. What they did see was something so indescribably brutal that they're going to have nightmares for several weeks. Those images will forever claw at their conscious. Everything they thought they knew about that man in the video died along with him.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. In death, the devil was remembered as a god.

A friend of the now dead representative, the CEO of a large oil

company responsible for the rape of a myriad of lands around the world, then appeared on the screen, crying to the news reporter. "He was such a good man," he said, referring to Green. "How could anyone be so cruel?" Ironic, that's the question I would have asked him and Green both had I been given the chance.

"More on this story as it develops."

...

I'm still waiting on the roof.

I hear the high-pitched calling of a bird near me. It's the red bird from before. I remember those eyes. He calls again. I don't move. Maybe he doesn't see me. He moves closer. He stops. Again he moves closer. He's within reach. I swipe at him, but I'm not quick enough. He flies off. Had I grabbed him by the tail I would have whipped him against the cinderblocks until his guts flew out. He's lucky and still completely oblivious to it.

I look back into my scope.

How many lobbyists does it take to screw over a country? Magnified into my right eye, I can see what had to be the hundredth limo that had pulled up to the hotel today. But this one is different. There they are, stuck to the corners of the hood of the car, little pillars each holding up the country's greatest symbol of hypocrisy—the American flag. Just as I realize this is the car I've been looking for all morning, Green has already stepped from the limo amidst a hail of flashing cameras.

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I wish I could have gone back a week in time and not to do what I had done. I had made the biggest mistake of my life. I

was so focused on fighting the war at home that I neglected to admit the possibility of the enemy reversing the situation to their own advantage. In trying to instill fear amongst the nation's most corrupt and most powerful individuals, I instead gave them an excuse to expand their empire. Without hesitation, they blamed the killing on an overseas enemy that they had their sights focused on for years. The assassination was an act of war, they said, and that's precisely what they pursued.

"What did you think would happen?" Carl asked, sitting behind me as I stared out the window at this cold, fucked-up world. He had already lectured me extensively on the history of assassinations and attempts, their results. Lincoln, Kennedy, Reagan... If you get killed, your face gets imprinted on a coin. No American will ever forget their fallen leaders who were assassinated while serving their term in office. The bad deeds of leaders never follow them to their grave. The unfaithful man who sent dozens of men to their deaths to suppress Vietnam's fight for freedom is considered one of the greatest presidents in American history. The biggest capitalist of them all, who believed in such ridiculous notions as giving money to the rich to have it trickle down to the poor, is one of the most beloved. How different would history have remembered these people if it hadn't been for those militant or crazy mother fuckers with guns?

"Huh?" he asked again. "What the fuck did you think?"

I was toying with my pistol. He made me nervous. Ever since I gave Green what he deserved, I just couldn't stand Carl's ranting. "Shut the fuck up! I've gotta to take a piss, and when I come back out, I don't wanna see you here."

He glared at me as I walked towards the bathroom. When I stepped back out, I was surprised to see him still there. That was the first time he had not taken my implied threat seriously. I looked over to the windowsill for my pistol, which I intended to point at him if he insisted on staying, but it was gone. "Where's my gun?!" He had a nervous look on his face, which was very unusual and didn't at all seem to fit the circumstances. "What's going on?!" I again demanded an answer.

He looked up at me. "I'm sorry," he said.

Before I could ask another question, my door flew off its hinges. An army of FBI agents were storming up to my apartment, and at the front of the brigade were two men armed with pistols shouting at me to throw my hands up and not to move. All of them were pointing their pistols at me. I instinctively raised my hands in the air and squinted my eyes, expecting to get shot, but it didn't matter. As soon as I pulled that trigger on that rooftop on that fateful day, I was a marked man. I had no rights. They would find me, and when they did, the only right I would have left was the right to be executed. They opened fire, pulling the trigger again and again.

I would like to tell you it hurt, but it didn't. I didn't feel a thing. I knew I was dead long before they burst through the door.

...

This is where I take the shot.

"I ask of You, steady my hands, assist my aim, and aid my bullet's path." I was never a religious person, but in such a powerful moment, one can't help but talk to God. I tighten the grip on my weapon,

taking aim. "If you do not wish this person dead, let my bullet miss."

He's finally in my crosshairs.

And I pull the trigger.

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