



Resolution

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e-Reader

PROLOGUE

The sports bar on the outskirts of Orpington in leafy Kent buzzed. It was eight thirty and West Ham were playing Chelsea on the large screen showing Sky Sports.

It was a typically modern set up inside, multi screens, a few pool tables and a large bar area served by young women who made themselves very busy offering easy banter with the punters. A number of gambling machines added to the lively atmosphere and general noise.

Tonight, there were maybe two hundred people inside, the beer was flowing and the lads watching the match shouted encouragement every time West Ham United had the ball. Every single one of them looked like trouble, short hair, muscles and plenty of menace. Not a pub that a stranger would be welcomed into, but never the cause of a lot of hassle. There was a very good reason for this - the owners didn't like the police becoming involved in petty trouble. They preferred to maintain the law and order themselves.

A further door led to a larger back room where two or three burly men acted as gate keepers. It would appear that your face had to very much fit before entry was allowed. Illegal gambling locations were not on the business plan submitted to the council before permission was granted for this club, nor was cocaine dealing or prostitution. But with the right credentials this is what you got; after all, with the Brood Family no expense was spared.

The main bar door opened from the street and a large black man entered looking around. This was his first day out of prison. In HMP Marwood he had been nicknamed Green Mile and he was a man with a gold Willy Wonka ticket to the back room. The gate keepers spotted him and beckoned him over where one took the heavy leather jacket from him and handed it to the bar staff.

"If you would like to get a complimentary drink from the bar, we will tell Mr Brood that you are here." They waved to another bar girl and a cold bottle of beer was passed to Green Mile. He drained it in two enormous gulps, the cold beer tasting like nectar after a year inside. He was also excited about a job offer on the table from David Brood, the second in command of the business.

The door opened and David strode over holding out a well-manicured hand.

"I have heard a lot about you Green Mile. Do hope that you don't disappoint."

They strode through the protected doors, David leading the way. Before Green Mile could register his surroundings, the crack of a Taser knocked him off his feet and he collapsed semi-conscious. By the time he recovered his senses he was fully restrained, hands secured in plastic cuffs behind his back, and he was sitting on a dirty wooden high-backed chair.

Through his dazed state, he looked around, registering that the roulette and card tables were moved to one side and twenty or more men stood to his front, all wearing white forensic suits and all armed with saws and meat cleavers. The room was covered in plastic and Green Mile knew that this was not a decorative feature.

"Ok you grassing little cunt, you may wonder why you are sat on a fucking chair two sizes too small for you and in the presence of heavily armed men in paper suits avoiding any evidence trail?" David paused while looking for Green Mile's reaction.

"You, my old son have grassed the family up. I have been given it on good authority that you have told a certain Mr Stephen Byfield that my family wishes to cause him harm. I will give you a chance to answer."

"Not true, I have said fuck all." Green Mile looked him defiantly in the eye.

"Is that the case?" David looked up and nodded. A door to the left opened up and a hooded figure was dragged in, the cloth hood hiding what must have been a horrific mess, the blood on his dirty shirt telling the story. Another chair was pulled up in front of Green Mile and the bloodied figure pushed down into it.

"Well old son I half anticipated that answer so let me introduce you to my little singing bird. Excuse his somewhat rearranged features but he needed some encouragement to sing." The hood was pulled off revealing Paul Parker, former Deputy Governor at HMP Marwood who stared blankly at him. Parker had been unceremoniously sacked from the prison service having tried to undermine Stephen Byfield's attempts to bring Marwood up to standard.

"Okay Governor, is this my 'not so little' grass?"

Parker nodded, he couldn't speak, and a frightful gash from his mouth to his ear prevented any sound except a whimper as the hood was replaced. David Brood looked up.

"Kill this grassing screw, but I will allow a quick death, he has served his punishment." Parker was grabbed and dragged back through the door.

“As for you my big friend, I have grand designs, and I’m not talking about the TV show.” He laughed at his own joke and the others joined in. Green Mile just stared back before saying “Fill your boots you fat faggot, slow or quick I couldn’t give a fuck, do your worst.” With a flash of anger in his eyes, unintentionally showing Green Mile that his words had hit home, Brood replied “Slow sounds very good” before turning to his men to give them orders.

“Now gag this ugly cunt and tie him to the chair; I am going to deal with this personally.”

West Ham scored a goal and the main bar erupted just as the cut throat razor much favoured by David Brood sliced through the dark flesh removing the left ear in a single swipe. The pain must have been horrific as the blood erupted in the same enthusiastic manner as the crowd. Green Mile passed out without much sound but was quickly revived.

“Bring in the dogs.” Brood ordered.

The same door that Parker had been dispatched through re- opened and two massive Rottweilers were led in heavily chained but still managing to look ferocious.

“Now my friends here are hungry for meat and very angry as we have unwittingly not fed them for a day or two.”

The dogs, with the smell of blood in their nostrils, strained at the chains. Brood took his cut throat again and cut off the T Shirt worn by the doomed man. His muscular body looked impressive and David commented, “May take a while to eat this little piggy, boys.” Again, there was laughter. In a final parting gesture David stood in front of the blood-soaked chair.

“Now, these boys are going to eat you in record time, and you my friend are going to watch. Good luck.” He took the blade and opened the man’s stomach leaving innards exposed. Green Mile screamed a long lonely scream as the dogs were released and heads buried into the exposed stomach tearing and snarling.

They were allowed to feast until it was clear that the man was dead. Brood stood watching without a flicker of emotion on his face.

“Ok boys, get these two dirty bastards away and back into the cage. Cut this fucker up and get rid of him. I don’t want to see his ugly face again, understand?” The group nodded and got to work with the tools.

CHAPTER ONE

Stephen awoke with a jolt and tried to gain his bearings. A thin trickle of cold sweat ran from his forehead and dripped on to the pillow beneath his head. The nightmares would not go away, the same dream night after night.

Always standing in a long tunnel, the silhouettes of Tanya with a child on either side were in the entrance, the children waving at him. Behind them Stephen could see the headlights of a truck hurtling towards them from the back, dust kicking off the wheels as the vehicle raced towards the unsuspecting trio.

He tried to shout, but feeling gagged no words would leave his mouth and trying to move his feet was pointless as they felt as if they were made of clay and melded with the ground. He simply stood in the darkness watching the terror play out before his eyes, helpless towards saving those who meant most to him in life. And then, just before impact, he would jolt bolt upright, gasping for breath and sweating horrendously.

Tanya, woken by his sudden movement, stroked his head and spoke softly to him. She was used to this routine and whispered reassurance, "You're dreaming again, it's just a dream."

Stephen leaned towards her and kissed her forehead, "Sorry, that dream came back again I wish I knew how to stop it, it feels like I'm out of control, even though I always wake up before disaster."

She smiled, "It's a dream, they are not real, just your brain working things out. Relax, it can't hurt you."

Looking at her in the half gloom his heart rate slowly returned to normal. He lay still, controlling his breathing until the feeling had gone.

She was a stunningly beautiful woman, only just thirty years old with a Spanish complexion and brown eyes that when he first met her begged him to look into them for a few seconds more than you should. It was a standing joke amongst all his friends that he was punching above his weight. In truth he agreed, but as he pointed out at the time, men age better.

Even the arrival of baby Hector in the last year had not damaged her stunning figure, and the other mothers at the pre-school which Ellie and Harry attended often claimed to be insanely jealous in regards to her ability to lose weight and tone up. She would tell them it was genetics but of course it wasn't, it was hard work alongside caring for three children under the age of five

As a Governor of a prison in the high security estate, Stephen had seen his fair share of horror but nothing, however, could have ever prepared him for the terrors that hit him last year. No-one in their right mind would ever consider what life felt like being chased by a serial killer, and then sitting trussed up like a chicken while the same man slaughtered your mother and destroyed your belief in God. Martin Heard, serial killer, had been placed on the earth to create misery, death and destruction, and only with the help of a small army, were they able to stop him. But stop him they did, stopped dead and he was now hopefully frying in hell.

But they could not stop what they could not yet see – the merciless eyes of the Brood family. A family so entwined within the gangster culture of London's East End that when they drew blood, the Thames wept red and when they sneezed everyone caught a killer cold. Stephen had already shut down their prison drug racket costing them a small fortune but now with revenge on their minds, that killer cold had Stephen's name all over it. He would need more than a hot honey and lemon to stay healthy with this one.

The Brood brothers headed up the family in unity, but in life they were very different types of men, both enjoyed violence and control but practiced it in their own unique forms. David Brood was approaching his mid-forties, it was difficult to guess how close as he dressed immaculately all the time and styled himself on the old-fashioned mafia father figures which gave him a timeless appearance. He loved art and all things cultural and took pride from learning how to play the piano to a reasonable standard. He disliked his slightly receding brown hair but kept its style short to counteract the look.

In another lifetime he may have made a good friend or someone that you would have a drink with in the golf club after a Saturday morning round. In this existence he was to be avoided at all costs. He would have your life taken in a heartbeat.

Kevin on the other hand was a couple of years older and craved none of the material things enjoyed by his brother. He needed little and was very at home in prison, which was just as well as he had spent a great deal of time getting used to these establishments. His tastes included violence, extreme violence and absolute control. He was married to a lady of sorts who waited for him as he moved from prison to prison. She enjoyed living on his reputation but wished that he had invested more money into a bigger home with an indoor pool, as his brother David had done.

Whenever he was out of prison, she played the gangster moll part, acting like Barbara Windsor, all blonde hair and cockney accent while occasionally getting offended by someone in the club in order to see them beaten senseless. Gangster colleagues of the Broods gave her an extra wide berth, just in case a misplaced look upset her.

Kevin always had an air of menace about him, toned body – almost the look of a middleweight boxer, thick, black hair kept relatively short, brown eyes that foretold your death and a slightly dented nose that nobody mentioned. During his periods out of Her Majesties Prisons his main vice was a nice car, which changed regularly as did girlfriends. He didn't care who knew and his wife couldn't care less, she didn't want to lose her status, and if he wanted to play with tramps on his nights off, it was his business, she didn't give a damn. She was far too busy mixing with the Essex jet set to let trivialities get in the way of a spa session or spray tan. Anyway, she was no one to preach celibacy. She had a steady flow of young men who liked her way of life while the husband was detained elsewhere.

One rule everyone around him quickly learned, was that if he wound down the car window when he saw you on the street, you ran to see what he wanted, whoever you were. Failing to respect this man meant you were gone. People who knew him said that he carried a weapon in his car at all times and if you saw it you were finished. If the tool didn't get you then the muscle in the car following him would.