

Sweat dripped down Cain's face as he disbursed the gasoline from its container onto the corpse he stood over. He knew the emotional high of killing this *thing* would subside but he didn't know to what extent. Cain's thoughts wandered to his family and how they would demonize him, no matter his arguments, for what he was presently doing.

A cop car, 20 yards away, was still flashing its lights. Cain knew he only had moments before more would come. He lit a match and tossed it on the dead cop. Conflagration ensued, something Cain didn't want to watch or smell. Cain, with as much calm as he could muster, stepped violently towards the police vehicle with an iron grip on his satchel. Though his hands were shaking, and any sound of sirens would send him fleeing, Cain methodically produced a plastic explosive from his sack and attached it to the requisite parts of the vehicle's door as to be engaged when the scene was investigated.

A short sob escaped his mouth as he fumbled around before successfully installing the device. He stood up, almost paralyzed in fear, and took a deep breath. The alley was alight with both flames and light from the police bar. The sky was black.

"Piece of shit," Cain breathed. The smell of burnt flesh, unknown to him up until that point, entered his existence. He jerked back and away from the source and walked, as calmly as he could, toward the exit he had been planning for months.

The brick skyscrapers that rose around him looked on him with malevolent judgment. Who was he to mess with life like this? Sure, that cop may have done horrible things but was killing him really necessary? More importantly, how was he going to continue his life without paralyzing paranoia?

Luckily Cain wasn't alone. He had advice in the form of an underground publication he found deep within a less regulated parts of the internet. It warned of the pervasive feeling of paranoia that would be felt after the first kill.

"Remember though," the book chided in Cain's recollection, "if you want to strike the root, meaningless, costless protest will not do. You must be fully committed to the cause. This will be a sign to others that you are serious and from there the movement, a real movement, is formed. Don't let paranoia destroy your will to fight the good fight and diminish the vociferousness of your protest. Remember this; push forward and don't be afraid!"

Cain's face glimmered in the moonlight from the nervous layer of sweat mixed with the dirt of New York City on his face. His brown hair was overgrown by the standards of public servants. This made it easy for them to separate him from their class as they paraded around the city in cars better than their subjects.

His arm throbbed as he brushed the hair out of his eyes. "Shit," he said, as the sweat burned his eyes and the smell of gasoline remained thick even to his now numb nose. He walked faster now as the first faint sounds of sirens came.

A prostitute approached him. She was really skinny with fiery eyes. "Why don't you buy me a drink?" she asked.

"Can't tonight," he replied, hiding his anxiety. He put his hand on her shoulder and said, "You're beautiful." Her nipples were perky beneath her almost translucent white top. Most of her legs were visible as she wore a short white dress, ostentatiously clean. She almost made him lose focus on his escape.

"Oh," she said with a wry grin, "You *know* you want to. I have a nice safe place we could have some fun."

"I do," Cain replied, "and maybe I'll come back. But right now I have to keep an appointment."

The sirens were much louder now. He was still within a few blocks of his crime.

"On second thought," Cain said, "where do you want to go?" She smiled and grabbed his hand. "Could we skip the drinks?" Cain asked.

With her other hand she grabbed at his crotch for good measure and said, "Oooh, right down to business huh? Follow me."

Police cars screamed past, ignoring the obviously illegal solicitation in progress. She led him down the alley, old brick buildings on both sides, trash and other debris everywhere. They passed sleeping indigents, stray animals, and various other elements of an ideal type city slum. They came upon a stairway that sunk down into the basement of one of the brick buildings they traversed. The door was shaded from the light of the city. They descended into the dark entry and the girl in the white dress rapped the door three times, quickly, and waited. Almost instantly the door swung inward.

"In," commanded a thick muscled male with a strong Russian accent. They entered. "Money, now!"

Cain realized that he wasn't prepared for this eventuality. He hadn't planned on soliciting a prostitute or even following through with the offer. He had made sure not to keep any money or identification on him. "Shit," he started. The book didn't cover this scenario.

"What?" the strongman asked. He grabbed Cain by the collar, lifted him, and shoved him against the wall. "You were going to fuck and not pay?" Spittle flew in Cain's face.

"No, no! I wasn't going to fuck her."

"What the hell are you doing then?" His accent was thick. Sirens were apparent a few blocks away. The Russian looked up towards the alley, "Oh." He loosened up his grip a little. "What did you do?" he asked, calming down.

The truth was not an option. "Nothing, I just wanted to talk to her."

"She has a name," the Russian said. She was grinning at the exchange they were having.

“Geneva,” she said, extending her hand to be kissed. Cain hesitated only a moment before complying with her invitation. Something about this whole thing seemed off.

“Ivan,” the Russian said while extending his hand the same way. Cain didn’t readily accept this request the way he did Geneva’s. “Hah, I’m kidding!” He turned his hand for a handshake. Cain took it. Ivan pulled him in for a rough hug and patted him on the back. Cain gasped from the force of it all. Ivan was oblivious to his own strength.

“What is this?” Cain asked after catching his breath. Geneva was taking off her clothes in front of him with no concern for modesty.

“You’ll see,” Ivan said, breaking into a smile at Cain’s confusion.

“Avert your eyes pervert,” Geneva said, with a hint of Russian in her voice.

“Am I being mugged?”

“Hah!” Ivan roared, “If I thought you had anything of value on you, you’d be dead.”

A funny thing happened in Cain’s mind. One minute Geneva was, to him, a prostitute who was willing to fuck him for money. Then, again in his mind, she was a co-conspirator with her older friend Ivan, to mug him. In both of these instances he had reasons to either look down on her in judgment or disgust. She had made herself accessible to him but only for a few minutes. Now, right before his eyes, she was transforming into a classy, unobtainable, beautiful Russian girl.

He did not avert his eyes but watched in silence. She didn’t seem to mind. Ivan slapped his shoulders to end his trance.

“So, you’ve read the book?”

“What book?” The truth was dawning on Cain, which further enhanced the transformation of Geneva.

“What book!? This guy!”

Cain studied Ivan, “I read a lot.” A cold sweat took him.

“And?” Ivan said, “I suppose, as a result, we now hear sirens above us.”

“Well,” Cain started, knowing that subterfuge was useless at this point.

“Welcome, brother!” Ivan preempted as he enveloped Cain in a hug.

Cain had to once again catch his breath before he asked, “What do you mean?”

“You’ve read the book. You’ve killed Officer Bartlett out there. You are one of us. We are one of you.”

Geneva removed her wig revealing neck-long blonde hair. She tossed the wig in a bag she was packing. Ivan turned from Cain and started packing his own belongings. The room that they were in was sparsely furnished, looking like the residence of squatters.

"That cop," Cain started, "imprisoned hundreds of people for victimless crimes. He ruined their lives. He shot a kid for resisting arrest even when there were no other viable charges against him. He's planted evidence, destroyed exculpatory evidence, and falsely testified against people who have been executed by the state."

Ivan turned back to Cain, "we know" he said.

"Unfortunately for us," Geneva began, "your choice of location was a bit too close to home."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know."

"No need to apologize," she said, not looking up from packing. "You saved us a lot of work. The only reason we're in New York was for him."

"So," Cain started, "are there more of..."

"Us?" Ivan completed.

"Yeah," Cain answered.

*Boom!*

Everyone went silent until Ivan asked, "Yours?"

"Yeah," Cain said sheepishly.

Geneva consoled him, "You don't have to be afraid or ashamed in front of us." Her straight blonde hair shimmered even in the low light, and he was comforted. She had a small birthmark on her otherwise perfect face, a centimeter above her lip. She was gorgeous.

Ivan slapped his shoulder again, "Shake it out, talk it out, or..." he whispered the last part so Geneva didn't hear him, "stare at her for a few minutes."

Geneva continued, "Revolutions need moral sanction. If a man goes out, alone, and fights for his freedom he still needs the sanction of at least one other person to be both sane and rational in his cause. If a man fights for something only he believes, why even fight? If a man changes a world that doesn't want to be changed then that man is the problem. Our mutual reading habits give all men a sanction to fight for their freedom. It gives them the argument necessary and the will to do so. Because, if there is just one man or woman out there who doesn't want to be enslaved, their children to be enslaved, then striking the root with all his might is the only way to do that. For years it has been done with argumentation alone. Now it is done with argumentation and action."

Ivan smiled heartily, "That girl has a brain, doesn't she Cain?"

“Wow, Geneva, I’ve never heard it put like that.”

Geneva smiled, “These are things slaves think about when plotting their escape. What’s the point of escaping if there is no one to escape to, or with? That’s why people like us need each other, and, more than you know, all of mankind needs people like us. In any case, we need to get out of here fast. Follow us.”

Geneva took the lead, followed by Ivan, with Cain bringing up the rear. She led them to a door on the far side of the room that led to another descending staircase. There was a hidden hatch in the wall that Geneva produced a key for. She opened the hatch and crawled in, beckoning them to follow. A blast of frigid air hit them chilling Cain because of the sweat on his face and his damp hair. Geneva wore a sweater and long pants, she had prepared for this course of action.

They entered a tunnel that sloped downward for half a mile before starting back upward. “What is this place?” Cain asked.

“It’s a tunnel built in the 1920’s prohibition period,” Geneva replied. “To this day it has remained undiscovered.”

“It is my grandfather’s,” Ivan chimed in. “It is quite extensive though some parts have collapsed in on themselves.”

“How did your grandfather come to own something like this?” Cain asked.

“Well, hehe, let’s just say it was an international exchange with a Boss from here in New York. My grandfather saved his ass. The boss didn’t need it much anymore anyways. Prohibition was over.”

“Nice,” Cain said, opening up to his new acquaintances but still tense. He had a million questions but didn’t know where to start. Furthermore, he didn’t want to pry too much into his new friends lives.

“We’re going to get you out of here Cain, do not worry,” Geneva said, trying to comfort him.

A lump was developing in his throat as the reality of what he had just done, what he had accomplished some would say, set in.

“We’re almost there” Ivan said. They had been walking for about a mile. “We have a car waiting.”

Geneva unlatched another hatch and exited. The air was considerably warmer.

“I have a car in Nashua. Could you take me there?” Upon seeing Ivan’s car Cain gasped, “Wow, Rolls Royce.”

“Eh, being the only heir to a powerful family line has its perks.”

“Indeed,” Geneva added as she gave Ivan a playful hug.

“Are you two...”

“Lovers?” Geneva finished. “That is none of your concern.” As if to ameliorate the rebuke she gave Cain a playful push.

The driver fit black man who was presently holding the rear door of the Royce open, beckoning them to enter. They did so, Cain followed. Geneva was sandwiched between the very large Russian and Cain. Cain was no small guy but juxtaposed to Cain he was tiny.