

Mr. Bye copy

Tom Lee
part 1

Bulfinch. ~~And we just~~ ^{Most} called him Bul. Bul had broken legs. Well, he didn't have broken legs yet, but it was so apparent as to what was going to happen to him that it didn't matter if his legs worked or not. They were broken. He had broken legs. He sat there sweating like it was hopeless to try and do anything else but sweat, like sweating was going to get him somewhere, he'd just sweat his way out of it. The original sweat suit. His was ruined. The tie, the jacket, the pants, the crisp white ralph lauren shirt, bought just specifically for this situation, and he was sweating in it, bleeding in it. Bul took what wasn't his, and he took to it sweating all over it like it was the girl of his dreams The guy was dreaming. We sat there, watching him sweat deeper and deeper into the ground, knees bruised from kneeling for so long. He felt like he was in a wall.

“Put it in your mouth. ~~Put it in your fucking mouth.~~ Too much sweat on your fingers? I wonder the fuck why.”

They shoved the gun barrell into his throat and he tasted the grease and the metal and he felt it against his entire life, and he yelled and vomited and the sweat got mixed up in there but it was muffled.

“You think you can fuck me, kid? You want to fuck me but you can't kid, but you can't, you don't got the balls for it.”

He tried to fuck them, he tried harder than anyone. He took what they wanted and he knew he didn't have the guts, didn't have the stomach, didn't have the right organs. He was empty carcass. He tried to get in and get out like it was nothing, like someone who know what they were doing. He didn't. They knew he didn't, they knew he loved what they had, and it was

too easy to let him rub his stained fingers all over it. They followed him. Bul had been sweating all the fuck over the man's bread and butter. Bul was going to die because of this bread and butter. He had dark eyes that sat in a rim of light green, and he held his head backwards, his chin up .

"Hey, man, you don't look so good"

"Tell me that when I'm not puking in the fucking sink"

"Yeah, well, what cereal do you have in the house?"

"Honey Nut Cherrios and Special K, why?"

"You don't have any Count Chocula, or fucking Cocoa Pebbles, Bernie? You're telling me that I gotta eat a bowl of fucking Special K?"

Bernie replied to the sink, loudly, violently.

"Alright, I'll eat a bowl of Special K, sure, yeah, I'll just do that."

"Bul, just shut the fuck up about your cereal, I'm busy."

"You don't get it man, the art of the bowl of cereal has been passed down since the twenty's. It's a long tradition of precise, skillful mastery of the cereal bowl. When a man's gotta eat, he's gotta eat right. He can't fuck around with his breakfast cereal, he can't eat a bowl of fucking Special K."

"Fuck sake Bul, Count Chocula ain't even good for you, eat something healthy for a change. I got maple flavored yogurt and some fucking bananas, eat that."

"No, you don't get it. Bananas, who the fuck are you? I'm going to the store to get Count Chocula. And clean up this fucking blood Bernie, make your house a little presentable."

"Fuck yourself Bul, you try and cut up a body without getting blood every where."

"Yeah well, we didn't even have to bring her here, no one would have given a fuck if they saw one of the man's girls on the ground bleeding."

“Bul, there are prints, you have fucking fingers don’t you? If any one knows who we are, we’re dead, man. Way more dead than this fucking body, way more dead than every fucker we’ve ever put a bullet in. The dead will be smiling, dancing sons of bitches when they find out who we are, because we got prints, we got fingers.”

“Yeah, well, You should have some fucking Cocoa pebbles in your house, maybe be a bit more hospitable.”

Bernie. Bernie finished cleaning up, it had been his second time cleaning a body, as they did it in rounds, each taking two bodies and then switching. It still made Bernie vomit when he had to drain the body of blood. He wanted to be able to drink something, but nothing stayed down. nothing even made it into his stomach. He hadn’t eaten in days. He sat there in the house for a long time after. Bernie’s pale eyes always drifted to the ground, and he would focus on the grains in the wood floor. Bernie stayed healthy, and when he stayed healthy he stayed orderly, because health was organization. He couldn’t leave the house without checking it three or four times. He made neurosis look like a crush.

Bul always made fun of Bernie for this. Bernie, you’re tie’s not straight. Bernie, you’re hair, what’s wrong with your hair? Did you not properly comb it four times through today? Bernie, I think we left the oven on, holy shit Bernie, we left the oven on.

Bernie, being the man that he was, lost his shit. And so he took to believing no one was ever serious, to avoid breaking down completely, and one day the house caught on fire. Count Chocula had spilt over and hit the electrical outlet, causing sparks to catch one of the dollar fifty curtains in the kitchen, catching one of the seven hundred and fifty dollar cupboards. Bul found the box of Count Chocula, burnt and ruined. He had only eaten a quarter of the box. He sat there whining. Complaining about the art of the fucking cereal bowl.

Charlie. Charlie was tallest, and because of this was the first fist to reach Bul’s side. Bul

felt the fist push against his abdomen with more force than it could take and he crumpled, leaving the complaint of cereal hanging in the air with his breath. Charlie held his eyes against sleepless bags, blue and bright. He stared his mother in the eye and rarely blinked. He did not shift, he did not shift like Bul, like Bernie.

Tom. Tom stepped outside the burnt down house, and lit a cigarette slouching on the dry lawn. He finished and flicked the burning butt to the dirt. It caught on fire, and the lawn began to burn. Soon all four were pouring buckets of water on the grass. The grass had not been watered this much for a long time, and never would be watered again. Tom lazily glanced back at those around him. He seemed to be sleeping half the time, the moss on the rock, the dust on the floor, his eyes molding over hazel. He walked as if he was gigantic, each step taking months to hit the ground. But when he fought, there was something different about him. You couldn't touch him, his hands moved faster than your eyes could move. You felt the hit after he dropped away. His eyes were shaded, lined, he held them at the top of your neck, licking looks at your jaw line.

“The hair, Bernie, the fucking hair. You have to cut off the air. For the neurotic mess you're supposed to be, you can't clean a body for shit.”

“I have trouble stomaching it Charlie. Not every one loves their fucking mother like you do.”

There was a joke that Charlie loved his mother so much, that nothing phased him. Because his mother was Dead. She died in front of him, murdered. Stomach cut open. He held her open stomach. He loved his mother. Nothing phased him. No one loved his mother as much as Charlie. Bernie continued to vomit. He didn't love his mother, she was a horrible cook and ate more than she could swallow, and the pool boy knew about that in more than one way.

It was small, the house they lived in, but it was on the edge of the city, and the city was

always foggy, and on the edge of the city they lived in a small house that had grass and it was not always foggy, and when the blue sky that they sometimes forgot about above them, they seemed to ease up, to loosen their white knuckled fists and to breathe deeper. Business was hard, but they forgot that, and began to get greedy, wanting to push against their finger tips the starch green leaflets of hundreds they would receive for a job.

The house was brown, wooden and old, with an old roof that would swell from the rain, but it held. There was a patio in the front that led to a living room that held a sofa and a recliner chair. A black television set sat against the beige walls of the living room, and when it was on it was always at a low volume. There were 2 bedrooms, and a closet. Charlie and Tom had the beds, and Bernie slept in the closet, and it was a big closet, but none the less a closet. Bernie liked that though, because it was easy to keep everything in order. Bulfinch took the sofa, the davenport. He slept on it like he had been stitched into the thing, pushing himself harder and harder against it, as if he would fall asleep more easily so secured to the sofa's frame. The kitchen was the biggest room in the house, and the stove was an old black gas stove that you needed to use matches to light. They kept a large table and four chairs in the kitchen, as well as a cutting block on the counter, taking up most of the space covering the white surface. The walls were beige, except for the bathroom and kitchen, which were rusted orange and red, dark and soft.

They had a basement where their work was kept, and a large gray pad lock holding the door inwards, quiet. When a body had to be cleaned, it went to the basement and was stored until it was needed for shipping, as proof of death. The city was proof of death.

Bernie began to clean up, and take the body in multiple bags down to the basement. The code to the pad lock was Charlie's mother's birthday. As he came back upstairs he heard the vacuum cleaner turn on. He wasn't sure why any one wanted to vacuum, it was just too loud right now, and they had to start getting ready for their next letter. The letters came in intervals, once each first and third Wednesday of the month. He walked upstairs to see Tom vacuuming the

hardwood floor in the living room, pressing the tube up against the wall and chipping soft paint off. This made Bernie frustrated, and he felt queasy as he came up to Tom, watching him peel at the paint.

“You shouldn’t do that.”

“The fuck I shouldn’t, Bernie.”

“You never know what’s behind paint.”

“Wood, Bernie. Wood is behind this fucking paint.”

“I’m just saying, Tom.”

The phone rang in the other room, and as Charlie walked in from the front porch he picked it up on the fourth ring. Tom and Bernie listened from the other room, and Bulfinch thought about cereal, and nothing, and the curve of a bowl. Charlie stood there for thirty seconds, and then nodded his head and hung up. Tom and Bernie let breathe come out of their mouths, shallow and musty. Bul sat there wiggling his toes.

“He wants us to go. Says’ we need to hit an apartment in the city. Says’ there’s a couple there, and they have a painting he wants.”

Bernie looks surprised.

“Why do we have to go shopping this time?”

“Because he said so. And I don’t like fish, so I’m gonna do what he says.”

“Funny, you’re mom likes fish”

“Yeah, well, smoked salmon is a tasty fucking meal.”

“She’s up to her eyes in it.”

“Shut the fuck up.”

“I wonder if she’s still there”

“You don’t need to fucking wonder.”

Charlie's mom loved the fish. She couldn't help it. She was swimming with them.

The request to grab the painting was different. Charlie knew Bernie was right in being surprised. He became skeptical, the call was too brief, too short on detail. He sounded sick, not himself. He, was the boss, was James Malkovischki, was the leader of the gang, was someone who you did not lie to or let down. He made sure he ran his city smoothly, each cog greased and shining. The city was covered with criminals, and was covered with people who hated criminals, and both died because of James, because he made sure his city ran smoothly. Maybe they didn't do what he asked, didn't pay their debts, acted out, tried to loosen the grip James had on their necks. Maybe their mother was in the hospital and they needed some cash and James gave it to them and they didn't think to refuse, they were desperate for help, and James gave it to them. But say they couldn't pay him back, couldn't give James what he wanted, if maybe they were a guitar collector, and had one James eyed for a few years. And they didn't want to let it go, but they would, and there would be sweat on the neck, and some blood on the strings, but James would wash it off.

This is where Bernie, Bul, Charlie, and Tom came into play. They didn't grab the guitar, they just made it easy to pick up on a later date when the owner would happen to not be there, ever again. James didn't want them handling what he wished to handle. It could be said that James was possessive. And a lot of people hated him, even people that worked for him. Maybe they knew where he would be tonight, and what number the apartment would be, and knew what was most precious to James, and knew that no one else would know, and with it they would easily have more money than all of the antiques and bills James kept saved. It was something beautiful, and disgusting.

If Charlie knew, he'd know that Bulfinch was not in the house, and was hanging up the pay phone done the street, and was sweating.

Night was musky, and swallowed the stars, and held down the hairs on your arms. They weren't knew to jobs, but all their fingers tingled and slid and tapped, and they felt awkward in their own boots. Bulfinch sat in the back of the 1957 Alfa Romeo, on the left side, where he always did, dripping in it. Dripping in sweat like he had never sweated before. Charlie and Tom and Bernie just stared straightforward, slowly forgetting the phone calls difference. Slowly forgetting the oddity of the job. Slowly moving their eyes. The apartment lay in the middle of the city, on 7th Avenue, hugging the right corner of the street, pressing to the sky, slipping upwards, falling into the clouds. It had a yellow hue, it had a yellow grin. The lights bounced outwards, eyes looking into the night, blind. Blinds pulled down. Around on 6th Avenue, Charlie parked the car, Bernie stayed, as always, since he was shakey with a gun.

The apartments were nice, and there was even a desk to check in at. Tom eyed the attendant, and told them that they were called for by Mr. Malkov, room 107. Skeptical, the attendant called. Mr. Malkov had called someone, a client, to bring in the debt they owed, and there was no client. There was only steel.

"This'll be easy."

"Tom, it's always easy."

"I'll take the husband, the boyfriend, the man. One to the head."

"Okay, door will be mine. Press the fucking button Bul."

"Oh, right, right."

"Quit sweatin Bul, this is shit cake."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Charlie, Bul look flustered to you?"

"Yeah, what the fuck Bul, mom got you by the balls?"

"No, no, no."

"And shit, who were you on the phone with outside the apartment?"

“Just a friend, you know how I’ve been talking to them for a while? About getting out”

“Yeah, buncha’ bull. Hah! that’s funny.”

“Yeah, fucking funny, huh Charlie.”

There’s not much else to these boys lives. Charlie loves the bullet in his head, and Tom’s blood covers the floor. James knew, he found out. He knew someone tried to set him up. He kept things close to his chest. Bul had been talking to a friend, Cormac, about killing James. Taking his painting. Tom’s bleeding on the floor, cursing. Bul’s got a gun in his mouth, sweating.

“Why the fuck a fucking painting? Bul, what the fuck.”

“Bernie’s coming.”

“No, fuck no, fuck no.”

“It’s the painting, tom, look.”

James spat. “The fuck it’s the god damn painting, the largest diamond in the world melted behind this bitch. I don’t like sweat on my fucking painting, ruins the layering.”

“I just wanted to get out.”

“Fuck you Bul.”

“I just wanted to get out.”

Bernie stepped lightly in to the room, and fell hard to the floor. His blood felt thick in his own fingers. Bul tasted the warmth of his head, and it became too hot to ever cool down.

“You never know what the fuck is behind the paint.”