

A trial of vengeance

Only one person knew the truth, though they dare not speak it. Since to do so in a homeless shelter would not only invite death upon oneself but also sharpen the blade of its reaper. So, while Barry Kirtman slides his crusty index finger over the top of my head, I clench my jaw tight, and listen closely.

“I know who did it,” he says, “and I’m gonna give that person 3 seconds to come out with it before I break their back on this table.”

We wait in silence with our heads down, imagining what it would feel like to have our back slammed on the table by Barry.

“Alright.” says Barry, cracking his knuckles against his chest. “Here we go.”

“One,”

Barry takes a step towards a man silently drinking coffee.

“Two,”

Barry swivels and steps towards me; my heart stops beating.

“Three.”

Barry reaches out. His hands graze my shirt as they grab the man beside me and drive his frail body into the wooden table. I turn away and close my eyes, my lungs swell, and my heart tightens; I can feel the limp body of the man roll over my shoes. Barry’s hand grabs my leg and pushes down on it to hoist himself up, I hold my breath. My mind races as if I was leaning over a bridge.

“Alright” says Barry, as he repositions himself toward the center of the room “I knew this gentleman here didn’t take what was stolen from me last night. Hell, I don’t know which one of you would be stupid enough to take something of mine. I was just testing to see if whoever did do it, had the guts to come out.”

It was evident that a worse fate would befall whoever declared themselves as having stolen Barry’s wedding ring. The ring that lives as a symbol of Barry’s late wife Johanna. Who I overheard had been suffocated by Barry in her sleep, after he found out she was having an affair.

Barry’s rage seems to grow stronger in the silence; turning his view to the nearest man, Barry strikes him in the skull, and watches as he falls over his knees and collapses on the ground.

I stare speechlessly as the man tries to stand, but Barry continues his wild assault. Over and over Barry’s punches impact the man’s swelling chest, while his arms flail hopelessly in the air. After a few minutes it seems Barry is now content with his attacks on the man, and I notice sweat streaming down his cheeks.

“So, is the one who stole it ready to come out now?” Barry asks.

“I am.” A voice shoots out from the back.

The room remains still; no one dares to look upon whoever it was that spoke. Our full attention is on Barry, whose face appears to be darkening.

“So where is it? Where is the ring?” Barry’s hands shake while they choke the air around them, his shoulders rising like wings on his back.

“I don’t know.” The man says, “I think I pawned it.”

“Where?” Barry asks, “Where did you pawn it?”

“I don’t know.”

The room feels dead cold, and my brain is screaming for me to run.

I watch as in a flash Barry leaps at the man, striking him down and holding his throat to the floor, blood vessels appear to be popping from the man's brain. Everyone in the room lurches back in horror, none of us moving, nor breathing, until Barry pulls out the knife.

Upon sight of the knife people scream and flee towards the exit in pandemonium. They push one another to the ground to hopefully reach the door first. Barry doesn't seem to mind; he found who it was he wanted.

The only ones who remain now are Barry, the thief, and the man being choked to the ground.

I watch silently as Barry takes the knife and holds it over the man's throat. When I get up to leave I am forced to awkwardly bend over to move the man below me. This position causes the ring in my coat pocket to slip loose, and both Barry and I hear the shivering sound its body makes on the floor.

The scraping crawl of a metal cylinder on tile; its voice calling for the penalty of death.