



The Last Hundred Yards

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It was supposed to be my day. The day I'd get everything finished. The day I'd be free from the iron fist of my To Do list. The chores were small, but they'd piled up. And today, I had the time to check them off one by one. I had hopes of crossing the finish line with enough time to let out a long sigh and take a much-deserved nap on the couch, but if it wasn't in the cards I'd settle for an early dinner and good night's sleep.

Not only was the alarm ringing at 6:00 am, but also the distinct scream of children rattled through the house. I'm sure you've encountered the shrill screech that only young girls can make. I guess I shouldn't be so sexist. There are plenty of young boys that can make the sound as well, but I had girls. The screams were quick, however often, as if the oldest were jumping out from behind blind corners and grabbing the two younger girls.

I could hear my wife's morning voice, "Girls, your father's still asleep."

"Not anymore," I tried to be happy about being awake.

I staggered into the kitchen, yawning and scratching my way to the coffee pot. My wife made the most horrendous coffee. You would think anyone could throw Folger's in an automatic pot and make something better than prison sludge, but not my wife. For all her endearing qualities, this poor woman couldn't make anything remotely edible. Ironically, I drank her coffee every morning. Maybe it was loyalty, but I thought of it as penance for the bad decisions I'd made in life. I figured there's no reason to start a disappointing day with a great cup of coffee, it will just get your hopes up.

"Morning, dear." Her voice was sweet and condescending at the same time. I remember thinking she was trying too hard to make today special as she gave me a kiss on the cheek.

I stood there glazed, going through the motions, "Morning." As she turned to tend to the girls and get them ready for school, I thought about how I wanted to tell her how much I loved her, how beautiful she was, how I missed the time when we were so much in love, and how I knew she was having an affair. But instead, I just took my cup of coffee and headed back upstairs to take a shower.

The shower quickly wrapped me in a womb-like state of complacency and daydream. The philandering of my younger years flooded my mind. Adolescent love and sex surrounded my senses and I could feel the

warmth of my past lovers. Their scents, soft skin and nubile bodies pressed against me and my mind fooled me deeper into the fantasy. As cliché and necessary as it may have been, I refused to masturbate. Much like a stripper's con, these prurient thoughts only reminded me of passion I no longer possessed. It was bullshit. And as much as I wished for another go-round at my youth, those days were gone. I opened my eyes, looked in the mirror, and was assured of that.

I got dressed just in time to kiss the girls and watch them leave for the bus stop. I felt slightly guilty as they waved from the driveway. And although I had just finished wishing this life had never existed, their smiles reminded me that my love for my daughters more than made up for the anger and resentment of my empty marriage. This happy thought was erased as I turned back into the house.

My wife and I didn't speak until I was ready to leave. "I'll be back later," I shouted.

She came to the top of the stairs in her bathrobe, "I hope you get everything done. I'll see you..."

"No later than four," I said.

We exchanged I love you's and I was out the door. It was reminiscent of my teenage years when I would dismiss my mother and run off with my friends to score beer or cheerleaders. Too bad today was filled with inane errands.

* * *

Between the barbershop and Home Depot, I began plotting. It was a simple plan, really. Instead of the Depot, go to the bank and clear out our savings. I could easily find a new job and start a new life as a single man. It would be five or six hours before anyone even missed me. By that time, I could be well on my way to Canada. Mexico would be way too obvious. Yep, Canada was the right direction to flee the life I'd made for myself. I'm sure my wife would quickly proclaim me missing, secretly hoping I was dead. And as soon as she could have our marriage dissolved, she would move on.

This was coming together. I turned right at the light and headed to the bank. Sure, my wife would be pissed about the money, but after she calmed down she would realize it was a small price to pay. I was giddy as I pulled into the parking lot. And as soon as I whipped my car into the nearest spot, it hit me. If I followed through on this half-baked scheme, I would be dead and some other man would be fathering my girls. It was

easy to dismiss the bad stuff like dating and general teenage crap. But I was essentially deferring all the amazing moments to some cheap imitation whose only claim to my family is committing adultery with my wife.

Fuck her! I wasn't about to give her that satisfaction. I started the car and pulled out of the bank parking lot heading back to Home Depot. The CD changed as I came to the first stoplight. My relaxed mood was shattered as Billy Corgan whined about my mundane existence. Right then I decided this was my day and I was going to do what I wanted to do.

Months ago, when I first realized my wife was having an affair, I decided to hire a private investigator. I explained he didn't need to tell me my wife was having an affair. That was a fact. His job was to find out who she was with, his job, his background, his family... his life. Wait. Let's back up. When I first realized my wife was having an affair, I decided someone was going to pay... dearly. Blinded by rage, I planned a rampage of death and destruction on the man that was fucking my wife. However, the rage subsided and jail was not an option for me. I'd seen Oz. Why should I get raped and beaten for my wife's promiscuity? Why should I lose my children because my wife was a dirty whore?

While planning today, I received a call from my private investigator with news about my wife's friend. I quickly told him that I wouldn't be able to get that information from him until later in the week. I was not going to let this day be spoiled. This was my day. I was going to have at least one more good day before anger and hate soured the remainder of my life, before my wife's deceit gained a face. But things had changed. I was ready to end the life I know and move to a better life. And although I wasn't going to run, I couldn't hide anymore. I fumbled for my cell phone and called the private investigator.

He was in his office, file at arms-length, when I called.

"Sure, come on by. I've got what you wanted." His tone was arrogance mixed with you're-not-going-to-like-this.

His office was small, and stacked with file cabinets, videotapes and cameras. Beyond the clutter was a contemporary office with designer furniture. Commendations lined two walls. You could tell he was good at his job. And if the atmosphere wasn't a good indicator, he'd be sure to tell you. He pushed the file across his desk.

"He's a cop."

There was no, "Would you like something to drink?" or "I hate to be the one to give you this news." Just, "He's a cop."

I opened the file and shuffled through the pictures. He was, in fact, a cop. I guess I wanted him to be some piece of shit, or some tennis pro or pool boy like in the movies. Someone no one would miss. Instead, he was a good cop, with a family, a house, two kids and a wife. He was handsome, every bit as attractive as my wife deserved. I pushed the file back across the desk.

The private investigator looked surprised. "Listen, I'm not your shoulder to cry on. You paid me to do a job and I delivered."

I stood up and walked out without hearing anything else he'd said. My head was pounding and I started to sweat. I wanted everything around me to simply explode and disappear. I was so mad I couldn't lash out at any one thing. I couldn't throw the file across the office like I wanted to. I couldn't kick over the trashcan in the waiting room like I wanted to. I couldn't kick my car door like I wanted to. I couldn't beat up the gutter-punks outside the office like I wanted to. I wanted to go on a rampage of obscenities, bullets and innocent victims, but I couldn't. Instead, I slipped into my car and pulled away from the parking lot.

My rage continued to boil out of control on the drive home. A mile away from the house I began ignoring stop signs and red lights. I could hear the other cars honking, but they seemed too far away. I fixed my stare straight ahead. My eyes felt as if they were going to push their way out of my head and through the windshield. I heard a lady scream and a dog yelp as I hit, what I thought was, a speed bump.

I made the final turn into my neighborhood. Involuntarily, my foot found the brake and nearly jammed it through the floorboard less than a hundred yards from my house. I took a deep breath. As soon as I inhaled, I heard the sirens. I looked in the rearview mirror. A single cop had pulled up behind me. This wasn't going to be a Hollywood moment. I wasn't going to be an outlaw. I pulled to the curb and shut off the car.

I didn't dare look in the mirror. I could hear the patent-leather cop shoes as he approached the car. I rolled down the window.

"Can I help you...?"

I saw a flash and smelled myself burning, but I never heard the explosion of the shotgun fired into my chest. The last thing I saw was his face, and realized my wife had plans of her own for *my day*.

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