

A BETTING MAN

Written by

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EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

A long stretch of highway. A deep orange setting sun. A car navigates the scarcely-placed traffic.

JARED (O.S.)
I don't even want to do this. You know you're basically forcing me to do this, right?

KELSEY (O.S.)
Oh, come on.
(pause)
Well, I think it's great we're going to see your mother.

JARED (O.S.)
(scoffs)
I know, I know.

KELSEY (O.S.)
How long has it been? Six years?

INT. JARED'S CAR - EVENING

JARED KING, 27, dressed well enough and sprouting a mild five o'clock shadow, is driving. His wife, KELSEY KING, 25, thin and lovely - and clearly about six months pregnant, rides in the passenger's seat. She smiles softly as she gazes idly out the window.

KELSEY
It has to have been at least six years.

JARED
Almost eight, actually.

KELSEY
You're a monster! Who goes eight whole years without seeing their own mother face-to-face?

JARED
I guess I do.

Jared gestures towards the road.

JARED (CONT'D)
Is this our exit?

KELSEY
It is, yeah...

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The car eases off the highway and down the offramp.

KELSEY (O.S.)
You realize that's almost our
entire relationship, don't you?

JARED (O.S.)
That's actually kind of
intentional.

INT. JARED'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jared and Kelsey continue their conversation as the car navigates the city traffic.

KELSEY
You know, she cares about you.
She's at least putting in the
effort to call and ask about you
from time to time, and even more
since...

Kelsey motions towards her belly.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
She's just trying to get to know
her son, babe. She wants to make up
for all that lost time.

JARED
Well, I'm not sure she can.
(pauses)
It's complicated. It's just always
been complicated with her and I. It
probably always will be.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - EVENING

The car finds its way into a restaurant parking lot and eases into a parking spot.

INT. JARED'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jared turns off the ignition. Kelsey looks over at him in earnest.

KELSEY

She's just excited, Jared. She wants to know you, as the man you've become.

JARED

I'm not sure if she deserves it, frankly. That was in spite of her, not because of her.

KELSEY

She wants to know her grandson.

Jared rolls his eyes and scoffs, but he knows she has a point.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Hey, don't be like that. I know she was crazy. You've told me all about the screaming and the slapping. I get it. I really do.

JARED

Then you should know that I have valid reasons for not wanting to be here, or be doing this.

KELSEY

I do, Jared, but she's not that person anymore.

She reaches over and takes Jared's hand.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is that maybe you've spent so long hating who she was that you haven't taken the time to learn who she is now.

Jared nods softly; he can't deny the logic. He knows she's probably right.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

I want our son to know his grandparents.

JARED

Well, *your* parents are both really wonderful...

She lets go of his hand.

KELSEY

All of his grandparents, smartass.

JARED

I know. I know how important it is
to you.

Jared gestures vaguely around. He smiles.

JARED (CONT'D)

We're here, aren't we?

KELSEY

We are.

Kelsey smiles back.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

I love you.

Jared puts one arm around her while deftly pulling a pack of
cigarettes from his jacket pocket with the other.

JARED

(singsong)

I love you too sweetheart please
don't be mad at me...

Kelsey sees the pack. She's legitimately surprised and feigns
anger. He begins opening the pack in front of her face.

KELSEY

Oh, and I thought you were
quitting, too?

JARED

I was. Those look nice, don't they?

KELSEY

They do. Jerk.

JARED

(chuckles)

I was quitting, then someone made
me come all the way out here to
have dinner with my mostly
estranged mother at some God-awful
quasi-Italian chain restaurant. I
was driven to this. My hand was
forced.

Kelsey breaks free of him, opening her car door.

KELSEY

Touché, but you're still a jerk.
And an ass. A real jerk-ass.

Kelsey chuckles to herself as she exits the car.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Kelsey exits the car with Jared not far behind. She starts towards the entrance while Jared stays back. He lights his cigarette.

JARED
I'll be right in.

KELSEY
Ok, I'll see if she's already here.
See you inside!

Kelsey heads inside. Jared takes a deep drag off his cigarette and exhales. A brief moment passes, and Jared savors it.

TIRES SCREECH as a large, black van comes to an abrupt halt right in front of Jared. A tinted window rolls down, revealing a DRIVER and PASSENGER, 30s, both clean cut in expensive suits, eyes obscured by sunglasses. Their demeanor is menacing.

VAN PASSENGER
Mr. King?

JARED
I'm sorry, what?

VAN DRIVER
We're very disappointed, Mr. King.

JARED
That's unfortunate. Who the fuck
are you? I'm trying to give a shit.

VAN PASSENGER
You're needed, Mr. King.

The van's side door bursts open. TWO MORE MEN, also in black suits, are in the back. They have guns.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

A well-dressed WAITER leads Kelsey to a table. GAIL, 67, Jared's mother, her nice outfit barely covering tarnish that only hard years can bring, sits waiting. Her face lights up as she sees Kelsey approach.

WAITER
Here is your table, miss.

KELSEY
Thank you.

Kelsey sits. In the window behind them, we see the large black van idling.

WAITER
I'll be back for your drinks.

GAIL
Thank you, thank you.
(to Kelsey)
Hello!

KELSEY
Hi, Gail. How've you been?

GAIL
Good, wonderful. Is Jared coming?
He's coming, right?

KELSEY
Yeah, he's just outside...
(sighs)
...smoking.

GAIL
Oh, I thought you said he quit.

KELSEY
I thought he did.

They share a laugh. The black van speeds away, revealing Jared's car. Jared is gone.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
I'm sure he'll just be a few more
minutes.

They begin to look over their menus as they wait.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Timeworn and rusted walls. Darkened boxes and defunct machinery. The stark white glow from a lamp cutting into an otherwise pitch-black room.

Bloody surgical tools on a makeshift medical station. The occasional CLATTER OF METAL IMPLEMENTS.

A SURGEON, 70s, stands above a table on which Jared rests face down. The surgeon is doing something to Jared's back while he sleeps.

ECHOING FOOTSTEPS announce the arrival of Mr. Bishop, 55, tall and slender with salt-and-pepper hair. He approaches out of the void wearing a black suit and glasses.

BISHOP

Mr. King.

The surgeon answers without looking up from his work.

SURGEON

He is still very sedated.

BISHOP

I see.

(pauses)

Is it done?

SURGEON

The device is installed and configured. I'm just closing him up now.

BISHOP

Can we awaken him? I'm afraid with everything already underway he may be a little pressed for time.

The surgeon pauses for a moment, looking Jared over.

SURGEON

(dismissive)

This is fine.

The surgeon retrieves a small bottle of SMELLING SALTS and hands them to Bishop.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

Will there be anything else?

BISHOP

No, You're dismissed.

The surgeon nods. He quickly gathers his tools and disappears into the darkness. Bishop paces, looking Jared over until the surgeon has gone.

Bishop walks over to Jared, places the smelling salts on the edge of the surgical table next to Jared's face, and retrieves a small hammer from a nearby crate.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Time to wake up, Mr. King.

Bishop raises the hammer up high and brings it down hard onto the smelling salts, shattering the bottle. Jared begins to twitch and sputter upon awakening.

Jared nearly tumbles from the metal table, but Bishop catches him. He helps Jared to sit up, but there is no concern in his demeanor.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
That's it. Sit up. You don't want to tear your...unfortunately somewhat incomplete stitches.

Bishop is enjoying this. Jared is swaying and slurring, still inebriated from the sedative.

JARED
What the fuck - where is this?
Where am I?

BISHOP
You missed your meeting, Mr. King.

JARED
What, are you, like, a really aggressive sponsor? Jokes on you, I'm not even in AA.
(pauses; drools)
Who are you?

Bishop slaps Jared across the face, hard.

BISHOP
Don't pretend you don't recognize me.

Jared is still reeling from the first slap, nearly falling over. Bishop sits him upright, slapping him again.

Bishop rears back for a third slap; Jared feebly bats at his hand.

JARED
You don't have to keep hitting me, dude, damn...

BISHOP

You missed your meeting yesterday, Mr. King. The event has already begun, and the Assembly is very disappointed in you.

JARED

(mumbling)

Wrong again, bud, I haven't been to an assembly since High School...

Bishop shakes Jared to get his attention.

BISHOP

You've made the wrong people very upset, and I think we both know that, don't we?!

Bishop releases Jared, who continues to sway but remains uneasily upright. Bishop straightens himself and reaches into his suit jacket, pulling forth a manilla envelope.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Your materials. I suggested we not even provide this to you, but they insisted on being fair. Somehow you still have a few friends.

Bishop throws the envelope at Jared's feet. It lands hard and with a muted crunch, its contents heavy.

JARED

I still don't know who you are, and what the hell is this?

Bishop is already walking away. Jared is still groggy and confused.

JARED (CONT'D)

Who are you?! What is this?

Bishop stops in his tracks and sighs sharply. He faces Jared with a cold glare.

BISHOP

Remember when I told you I'd make you pay? That's what this is.

Bishop composes himself and turns again to leave.

JARED

I don't fucking even know you!

Bishop's composure breaks and he spins back around. He lunges at Jared and grasps him by the throat.

BISHOP

You may be a lot of things, King,
but I never would have assumed you
dumb enough to think that *I'm*
stupid. You might have never seen
my face, but I know who you are,
try as you might to exist as a
ghost.

Bishop shoves Jared to the floor and spits on him.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

You'll get to do that in actuality,
and in perpetuity. Soon.

Bishop turns, walking away towards the darkness.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Mr. King. Say hello to the
cleaners when they arrive.

Bishop and his FOOTSTEPS disappear into the void, a few moments later a distant DOOR OPENS, then CLOSES. Jared sits in the sole spot of light, bewildered and dazed.

JARED

What. the. actual. fuck. was. that.

He turns his attention to the manilla envelope. He retrieves it and looks inside. Shocked at its contents, he gasps. Inside he finds a 9mm handgun, a loaded handgun magazine, and a cell phone with a cracked screen.

JARED (CONT'D)

What the hell is happening?!

Jared lowers his head, rubbing his forehead and trying to stabilize himself, but there are still drugs in his system. He stumbles a few times and eventually stands and rights himself.

JARED (CONT'D)

Where is *my* phone...

He searches his own pockets. He gasps in unexpected pain, bringing his attention to his mid-back, left side...

JARED (CONT'D)

Did they take my kidneys or some
shit?

We see a fresh surgery incision, close to the spine. It is crude and only partially closed. Jared winces.

JARED (CONT'D)
What the hell did they do to me?!

Jared is beginning to panic when a door is heard opening somewhere in the warehouse. Jared quickly ducks down, scrambling away from the light.

JARED (CONT'D)
(whispering)
shit shit shit shit shit shit

He draws the handgun from the envelope and waits. Jared hides and brandishes the weapon artlessly; the barrel shakes as he glances around the corner. FOOTSTEPS can be heard approaching.

Three people are walking into the building. Two GOONS in light combat gear, clean-cut, intimidating. Behind them enters MS ROOK, 25, small with an air of danger about her.

MS. ROOK
Find him. Bring him to me.

GOON 1
Yes, Ms. Rook.

GOON 2
Yes, Ms. Rook.

The two men start walking along the perimeter of the warehouse, guns at the ready position.

Jared fumbles with the pistol in the dark. After several tries he locates the safety and switches it off.

JARED
(Whispering)
Just like Call of Duty...Just like
Call of Duty...

Jared runs out from behind the corner. He fires a BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE.

JARED (CONT'D)
AHHHHHHHH!

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Ms Rook sits at a desk in a disused office within the depths of the warehouse. She chews gum, humming to herself with her feet on the desk. The DISTANT GUNSHOTS echo within the building. Unflinching, she gazes up from her phone for a moment, then back down again.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jared stands dumbfounded after every shot misses completely. Not knowing how to reload a weapon Jared fumbles around with the gun. Goons 1 and 2 straighten their stance and cock their weapons. Jared drops his gun and raises his hands, averting his gaze. He sways trying to stand, still sedated.

JARED

Ok, fuck it, you got me. I had to try, right?

GOON 1

(into radio)

We have him, Ms. Rook.

GOON 2

Don't move. Let's go.

JARED

Those are two very different things that you're telling me to do.

GOON 1

Shut up and come with us.

JARED

I don't even know what the fuck is going on.

The two men hold on to Jared and drag him down the hallway past more dust-ridden equipment and boxes, Jared finding it difficult to walk, still being intoxicated. They stop as a SOFT SCUFFLE is heard off in the darkness.

GOON 2

Did you hear that?

GOON 1

Yeah, it's probably a rat or something.

A SOFT WHISTLE reverberates out from the blackness. Someone is out there, and that someone is playing games. Goon 2 drops Jared's arm and draws his gun.

JARED

(chuckles)

I think that rat is catcalling you, boss.

Goon 1 releases Jared, who topples to the floor. Goon 1 draws his weapon and scans the area.

The rhythmic pulse of a VIBRATING CELL PHONE starts up. There's another SOFT WHISTLE from a different direction.

JARED (CONT'D)
Ooooooh, you hear that? He thinks
you're hot.

The two goons begin to slowly sweep the area. Jared makes an unsuccessful attempt to stand.

JARED (CONT'D)
He probably wants to bring you guys
home and marry you off to one of
his adolescent turtle sons...
(mumbling)
He wants grandkids...

Jared reaches into his pocket and pulls out the broken cell phone Bishop had given him. It vibrates and the screen reads 'Proximity Alert - 1'.

JARED (CONT'D)
(whispering)
...what the hell is this?

GOON 1
Shhhh! Shut up, you!

While Goon 1's back is turned, we see SONNY, 36, Hispanic, shaggy, wearing a plain outfit - emerge from the shadows holding a pistol equipped with a silencer.

Sonny kicks Goon 1's leg out, knocking him off balance. Sonny is quick to get him in a headlock. He trains his weapon on Goon 2 while using Goon 1 as a human shield.

Goon 2 turns to Sonny and Goon 1, and instead of expressing concern, scoffs in disbelief. He aims in their direction.

GOON 2
Oh, what's this? A Pawn? What's
your play here, little fella?

SONNY
That should be obvious. I'm taking
him.

GOON 1
The fuck you are!

Sonny tightens his headlock on Goon 1.

SONNY

Hey hey hey, shhhhh, the grown-ups
are talking.

Sonny turns his attention back to Goon 2 and cocks the hammer
of his gun.

GOON 2

Bullshit. You don't have the ball-

Sonny fires a SILENCED SHOT that strikes Goon 2 directly
beneath the right eye. With a quick head jolt and a spray of
red mist, he falls heavily to the ground. Jared freezes, eyes
wide with shock.

Sonny turns the weapon to Goon 1's temple.

GOON 1

Wait --

Sonny fires another SILENCES GUNSHOT into Goon 1's head.
Sonny carefully lowers Goon 1's limp body to the floor.

Jared is looking on in abject fear. Sonny approaches Jared,
who scrambles back away on all fours as best he can through
the drugs.

SONNY

We gotta go.

JARED

Stay away from me!

Sonny rolls his eyes and shakes his head. He holsters his
weapon and moves in towards Jared.

JARED (CONT'D)

Don't touch me!

Sonny leans in and grabs hold of Jared.

SONNY

(quietly)

You need to listen to me. We have
about 90 seconds until the stone-
cold bitch waiting for you out back
realizes her rent-an-assholes are
dead and calls in the other five or
six guys waiting in SUVs out front.

Sonny takes a cautious look around. He turns back to Jared.

SONNY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Then they get to come in here to raise hell with a bunch of automatic weapons, which I assure you, they'd love any excuse to do. You don't want to be here for that. Do you want to be here for that? I don't want to be here for that.

Jared shakes his head.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I didn't think you'd want to be here for that.

JARED

Who the hell are you?

SONNY

My name is Sonny, and aside from you, I'm the only person who wants to see you leave this building alive, which means right now, I'm your best friend.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Ms. Rook locks her phone screen and impatiently looks around the warehouse office. She takes her feet from the desk, sits forward, unholsters a compact pistol, and chambers a round. She shakes her head, irritated, as she gets up and heads for the door.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jared seems overwhelmed as Sonny helps him to his feet. Jared stands on shaky legs.

SONNY

Are you okay?

JARED

(sarcastic)

No?

Sonny advances to the nearby corner. He takes cover and checks the area ahead.

JARED (CONT'D)

What is all this? What did I do?

Sonny turns gives Jared a baffled look and scoffs.

SONNY

Jesus, they gave you the good
stuff, huh?

A SLAMMING DOOR echoes from deeper within the building. Sonny and Jared exchange a concerned glance.

MS ROOK (O.S.)

(distant)

What is taking SO. FUCKING.
LONG?!?!

HARD FOOTSTEPS and a FIST BANGING against a wall.

MS ROOK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(closer)

What the fuck? Let's goooooo
booooooys!

Sonny backs up from the corner. He grabs Jared as he retreats back down the hallway.

SONNY

She's absolutely right. We need to
go.

Sonny heads down the hallway, practically dragging Jared as he stumbles. They disappear into the shadows of the rear warehouse.

Ms. Rook's FOOTSTEPS CRESCENDO as she approaches. She discovers the corpses of Goon 1 and 2 in pools of blood on the floor. She sneers and pulls out a handheld radio.

MS. ROOK

All units, this just changed from
fun to *work*.

(pause)

Get in here! NOW!

She jams the radio back into her pocket and scans around the warehouse, her gun at the ready.

EXT. WAREHOUSE FRONT - NIGHT

Two black SUVs sits in an otherwise empty parking lot. Doors burst open and three more GOONS, black-suited and lightly armored, exit carrying submachine guns and assault rifles.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Ms. Rook leads Goons 3, 4, and 5 down a filthy warehouse hall.

MS. ROOK

King is on the move, but should still be sedated. Knights Beta and Delta are down. Sweep the building.

GOON 4

Yes, Ms. Rook.

Ms. Rook stops in her tracks and turns to face her squad of Goons.

MS. ROOK

No one kills him but me. Do you understand?

The Goons nod and mobilize to search the building.

EXT. WAREHOUSE REAR - NIGHT

Sonny and Jared slide out the side door, Sonny dragging Jared along as he stumbles. Sony motions towards a dark sedan parked in an adjacent lot.

SONNY

This way.

They move away from the building quickly and silently.

EXT. NEARBY PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sonny and Jared arrive at the dark sedan and clamber inside. The engine starts and the vehicle begins moving forward slowly, lights still off. It leaves the lot and heads down the

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sonny's dark-colored sedan drives at an inconspicuous speed. After they're a safe distance from the warehouse, the headlights turn on. The vehicle accelerates.

INT. SONNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sonny is driving, and Jared sits in the passenger's seat. Jared is still reeling from the tail-end of the sedative's effects.

JARED
I'm gonna puke I think.

SONNY
Please don't puke in my car.

JARED
Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm gonna puke in your car.

SONNY
Please don't puke in my ca-

Jared's head falls between his knees. He HEAVES and VOMIT SPATTERS on the floor.

SONNY (CONT'D)
Awww, man, you could have at least...

Jared HEAVES again.

SONNY (CONT'D)
The window was *right there*.

Jared wipes his mouth as he looks up at Sonny. There's a cell phone VIBRATING.

Behind Jared - hard, bright headlights fill the window.

SONNY (CONT'D)
Oh shit!

SHATTERING GLASS and COLLIDING METAL as Sonny's car is rammed in the rear passenger's side! The vehicle spins across the

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sonny's continues to spin out, then stops in the middle of the road. The black jeep that hit it, its front-end collapsed, slows to a stop. The jeep's door opens.

TOUGH-GUY THOMAS, 38, a solid wall of a man in full tactical gear, emerges from the car. He draws a shotgun from a sling over his back and cocks it.

Inside the jeep, pinned behind the driver's wheel, is GEOFF, 35, bloodied and broken.

GEOFF

You gotta help me out, Tommy...

Thomas points the shotgun into the car and pulls the trigger without a thought. There's nothing but blood where Geoff's face used to be.

THOMAS

Sorry, bud.

Thomas turns and starts towards Sonny's dented and smoking sedan. He chuckles to himself.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I just got myself a bigger share.

Thomas racks the shotgun's slide as he continues on towards

INT. SONNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS