

Give Blood and Thanks

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Chapter 10: Coffee and steak make Arthur Martian's gears turn.

"Refill sir?" the waitress asked.

"Sure," Arthur scooted his cup toward the edge of the table. She filled it and spilled a few drops on the packet of Snoogin's utility records.

"Hey, watch it," he said.

"Sorry."

Her sharp features turned a shade of pink. The girl couldn't be more than nineteen years old. She looked at the ground, paused, then turned to walk away. Short cropped black hair bounced in rhythm with her slim hips. He recognized that type of behavior. Pausing like that, it indicated she was waiting to be dismissed by him, the man. Arthur could only guess what sort of asshole broke her. If he had a dollar for the head of every stepfather he slammed into a door or a wall he would probably have close to a hundred. His eye's stayed locked on her as she gracefully floated back behind the counter.

Arthur had always been a bachelor type of guy. Never married and no kids to speak of, never saw much reason for it. The way he

figured it, he would die early from smoking and eating red meat. 'Could also get shot on the job,' he thought. Why put anyone through that? He picked up the summary of Emily's last couple months of bills.

He skimmed through February's phone records, then March, and finally April. The numbers all checked out as indicated by John's numerous high-lighted calls and notes in the margin. Little brother was thorough and successful in impressing Arthur, just like he intended.

You can tell a lot about a person from their payment history. Emily for instance, never paid a bill on time in the last year. Coincidentally she started falling behind right when her husband's pension was taken from her. Another elderly victim of the running joke that is the federal government's financial aid, Social Security.

It didn't take long for the utility companies to disconnect their service's once they found out she was dead. Phone service was within a week, May first if you want to get specific, and Arthur did. Cable and internet service was gone by May third. Arthur put down the papers and picked up his steak knife. He carved off another bite of the bloody eight ounce New York strip, now cold. He reached for the steaming mug to wash the meat down and looked at the smeared drops

of coffee on the power bill.

'Disconnected: April 23rd, 2009,' it read.

Arthur did a double take and choked on the steak. He slowly took a sip of hot coffee with a trembling hand to remove the anxious obstruction in his throat. After he was sure he wouldn't turn blue and suffocate he picked up his cell phone. His callused thumb (from pulling back the hammer on his pistol so much) held the number two. The LCD glowed, calling 'Jonathan Martian,' it read. He put the speaker end to his ear as it started ringing.

"Hello," the sleepy voice said.

"John, did you check with the power company about Snoogin's house?"

"Dude, it is two in the fucking morning, don't you ever sleep?" John said. Now alert and agitated.

"Did you?"

"Uhh yea, they said it was off. I told them to turn it back on so we could resume our investigation. That house is on precinct

payroll for power as we speak, so hopefully you didn't leave any lights on when you were playing animal control the other night."

"Let's play a game John. It's called don't be a smart ass. Now listen up. Emily's power bill says the service was disconnected on April twenty third."

"So?" John just wanted to get back to sleep.

"According to the coroner Emily was killed on April the twenty-sixth. From what we gather she was completely alone with her arm in a blender chewed to hell. It might just be me, but I have never heard of an industrial strength battery powered blender." There was no response on the other end of the call.

"Still awake?" Arthur said. He was pleased with himself. They finally had an anomaly, something to work with, not quite a lead, but something that would finally enable them to remove the thumb from their ass.

"Yea, I'm still here. How in the hell does a blender get powered on in a house that is off the grid? Generator or extension cord is the only way."

"All of the neighbors statements indicate no one talked to her for at least two days before she died. No generator was heard in quiet suburbia that night. John, that blender was plugged in the wall when we got there."

Chapter 11: And when he broke the seventh seal there was silence in Heaven. For about half an hour.

Beep beep beep!

Smitty lived alone above his shop and heard the beeping coming from down stairs. He reached in the small space between the wall and the fridge, guess snacks will have to wait. Most people would keep a broom there but most people didn't have ten thousand dollars of merchandise and a business right below them. Smitty pulled out the twelve gauge and slowly put a cartridge in the breech. He held the slide with his hand to muffle the snap and click.

Beep Beep Beep!

When he reached the bottom of the stairs he flipped the lights on.

"Alright mother fucker, get out," he shouted and pointed the gun into the lobby of the store.

The alarm pad blinked red indicating it was still armed. Smitty looked at the microwave Remy had brought in, it sat on the floor in front of the counter. The inside light was on, and the display was

indicating something had been cooked. It was blinking between the words "Done and Open Door." Smitty didn't smell anything. Slowly he approached the microwave observing it through the bead at the end of the gun barrel.

Beep beep beep! 'Done. Open door.'

He got down on his knees and laid the gun on the carpet. Bending down, he put his hand on the door of the microwave and jerked it open. A flash of white light and heat engulfed his face burning all the hair; eyebrows, eye lashes, and the beard all gone in an incendiary instant. Smitty rolled to his side and screamed from the pain. His eyes, the pupils were being strained like someone was forcing him to stare at the sun. Nothing but white light and burning pain, then he fell silent as his body prepared to salvage itself by shutting down. The chubby fingers fell limp and uncovered his eyes. There he laid seeing the faintest outline of the microwave. A mechanical Angel of death engulfed in the white light of God. The single door was still open to reveal the portal to heaven or hell, he wasn't sure. The pronged tail of the Angel was still zipped tied and bunched up next to it.

Smitty lost full consciousness within seconds.