

Give Blood and Thanks

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Chapter 16: What it is Smitts?

A little dark haired boy sat opposite Detective Arthur Martian and Officer John Martian in the waiting room of the Marshall General Hospital. Arthur leaned his head back against a poster warning the public about the dangers of second hand smoke. His long brown overcoat was pushed back under the arms of the cheap chair exposing the grip of his .38 in the shoulder holster and the red top of a pack of Marlboro Reds in the vest pocket. The little boy, who couldn't be more than seven or eight years old, stared at the pistol's handle with wide eyes. The boy's mother provided a familiar inner city ambiance with her screams at the receptionist. Really, she just loves her family and wants to provide a better life for her children. Is that so wrong? Medical bills keep piling up and they won't cut her a break, these systems, are broken. Arthur noticed the boy staring and nudged John to get his attention.

"You ever remember having an interest in guns when we were kids?" Arthur asked.

"Yea a little bit. Probably only because it was against the rules to touch them. Dad had us scared shit-less."

"Yea, the old man was good about keeping some structure. I

guess." Arthur prepared for John to react. This was part of the game he played with his brother. Crack about Dad, John picks up the fumbled ball to save his face, and then Arthur tackles him in the open to bring Dad back down.

"He was. I don't think Dad was all that bad when it came down to it. What happened between you two that made you take off so soon and hate him so much?"

Arthur felt the hair stand up on his arm. John was calling him out. In a way Arthur was happy John blamed himself for their father's death. Up until that day five years ago it was Arthur who dodged the questions about Dad. It was Arthur who told John to shut up. Arthur was relieved to see the old man go. Arthur could make his therapeutic snide comments about Dad and John would never want an explanation or let it go any further. Arthur was counting on this to continue for a long time, at least until his own wounds caused by the old man were healed. Now John was asking, asking a direct question, and Arthur was not ready to dodge, not ready to relive, not ready to tell the truth.

"Detective Martian you're clear to go in now." The receptionist shouted over the pleading mother.

"Later. Let's go. Remember, fly on the wall." John nodded and they were buzzed into the visitor entrance to the Hospital's labyrinth.

Arthur and John entered Smitty's room and John immediately sought out a dark corner. Smitty didn't need to know anyone but Arthur was in the room, it would help him keep calm and honest.

Smitty was hooked up to an array of run down medical equipment. Run down, but still quite functional because it was built to last. Most of this stuff came before specialty plastics. This equipment was sculpted from glass cylinders, rubber tubes, and stainless steel polished to a mirror finish. The huge lump of Smitty was covered in a brown scratchy blanket and was illuminated by the dull glow of one examination lamp.

"Who's there?" Smitty's eye sockets were bandaged with a few wraps of thick gauze. While no eyes remained, the wounds still bleed heavily. The human face contains a large portion of delicate artery structure and it bleeds easily, very easily.

"Andrew my name is Detective Arthur Martian. I was the one that found you after you were attacked. I want to ask you a couple questions." Arthur pulled a doctors stool under him and gently sat

on the oversized cracked cushion. He rolled over to Smitty's bedside. Smitty was sitting up moving his head back and forth trying desperately to pin point Arthur's location with his new amplified senses.

"Get the fuck away from me. I don't want to talk to nobody. Stop harassing the blind man. Can't you see I'm in enough pain as it is? I don't need you damn cops in my business. I have done nothing but help the community I'm a part of. I didn't know if the stuff I bought was stolen or not. Don't ask don't tell, that was my policy. People got money to feed their families and I sold the stuff back into circulation eventually. Everybody was winning. Just get the..." Arthur interrupted and John quietly suppressed a smile.

"Smithe I don't care about your business operations. I want you to talk me through what happened the night you lost your eyes."

"I don't wanna talk about that either. Just get the hell away from me." Smitty turned and forced the side of his face hard into the pillow staining it with blood from his empty eye sockets. He thought he was facing away from Arthur. Arthur stared into the moist bloody eyes and spoke softly into Smitty's ear.

"If you won't talk to me I'm going to tear your little store

apart looking for evidence. I know you were dealing more than just stolen bikes and appliances in that filthy hole. Can you imagine being a fat blind guy in prison? They would stuff your ass like a Mexican pinata and then beat you hoping for their candy back. All you would know is the musk of their odor and the taste of their sweat. If that is what you want, than I'll leave. If you want to talk me through that night I'll let you play victim here on the outside for a long time." Arthur waited for a response from Smitty. He stood up and sent the stool sailing hard into the counter. The bang made Smitty jump and start to tremble.

"Alright, but your going to think I'm fuckin' crazy."

"Try me," Arthur said.

Smitty told Arthur about hearing the beeping, grabbing his gun, and going to investigate the microwave. John's cellphone vibrated in his pocket and he slipped out the door to take the call. It was duty on the other end of the line.

"The devil himself was controlling that microwave. It wasn't plugged in or nothing." Smitty grabbed into the air and surprised himself when he caught Arthur's arm with a fist full of his coat. Smitty pulled himself close, Arthur didn't resist. Then Smitty's

face changed, his voice got deeper and he bared his teeth. Smitty projected bits of spittle as he talked.

"You would do well to stay away from us Arthur. We wouldn't want Daddy to get at you with his belt would we?" Arthur jerked back from Smitty's grip and didn't say a word. The sounds of the heart monitor doubled in intensity and echoed in the silent room. Each beep made Arthur cringe as he stared at the face seething with anger. Smitty's chubby cheeks and dumbstruck Stevie Wonder sway returned.

"Andrew?" Arthur muttered through quivering lips.

"huh? Fuck, you're still here. I'm done talking. Go away." John opened the door and leaned his head in. "Who is that? Who is here now?" Smitty demanded. John didn't acknowledge him.

"We've got to leave bro. You look like shit, you okay?" John said.

"I'm fine. What you got?"

"Sally has been killed and we got Brody in lockup as a suspect. I'll fill you in on the way to the station." John didn't wait for

Arthur to move and disappeared heading for the car. Arthur looked back to Smitty when he got to the door. He was still shaken from, from whatever the hell just talked to him through Smitty.

Now Sally has been wasted by Brody. He had forgotten to release Brody. Short staffed and late at night; he was probably sitting in interrogation for a couple hours. Maybe he finally snapped, maybe not, maybe Arthur just needed a few minutes to sit down and clear his fucking head. What the hell is going on?

"Thank you Andrew."

Smitty flipped off the wall cabinets trying to assault Arthur with a twirling middle finger. Arthur smirked and quickly made his way to the car.