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According to Luke

“You want it from the beginning? The very beginning? I don’t know if there was ever a single beginning but I know where I start.”

There I was, walking down the grey, cracked sidewalk, made with crumbled conglomerated stone instead of the typical concrete. It was a calm summer day on Carmen Avenue in Westbury, NY. The teal painted mini-mall was before me; its red lettering sporting names such as Carvel, John’s Laundromat, Deli, Dairy Barn, and Ristorante Venere on the corner. Two gas stations, a Mobil and Shell were up on the corner. Today, my destination was the Dairy Barn to grab some milk.

A man’s face separates itself from the crowd. He was a tall beastly man, with wild hair and a square herculean jaw. One look at the man, and I knew he was no son of Zeus. His eyes were black irises. Our eyes met. His mouth broke into the smile of a jackal that sees his next kill.

I duck into the Dairy Barn. My eyes search for any safe haven. Bingo. Swiftly I hide inside one of the walk-in coolers. I close the steel door behind me. The latch clacking shut.

I do not know how much time passed. It could have been 5 minutes. It could have been an hour. Throughout my time amongst the 2% milk, eggs, and cheese I heard grinding steel, explosions, and shrieks of terror. My body’s temperature dropped to dangerous levels. Silence. My teeth began to clack together like a snakes rattle. I unlatched the door.

The freezer was all that remained of the Dairy Barn. Carmen Ave looked as though it had been struck across the face with a sledgehammer by a strongman with a running start. The Mobil was absconded from its corner. The

Shell was, well, just a shell of its former self. Standing in the middle of this ground zero, was him. His back faced me, his body shaking. He was laughing.

Suddenly, I felt something rise inside me. I was angry. I was angry at him for doing this, angry at myself for doing nothing to stop him. I started to yell at this, this thing, this monster standing before me. “Who do you think you are?” I bellowed. The man turned, slowly, like the hour hand on a clock, “Why,” He said “I am Demos.” I ran.

I shot up in my bed. Heart pounding through my undershirt like the bass at a dance club. Sweat soaked my skin as if I had run ten miles. The blonde girl with emerald green eyes from the night before lay still next to me, sound asleep. *Mother had those green eyes.* I slowly got out of bed and walked to the bathroom for a glass of water. The florescent light made the white tile yellow; the porcelain sink was streaked with stains. Someone got sick tonight. I checked the toilet, no damage, and picked up my blue cup with my toothbrush in it. Removing the brush, careful to put it somewhere puke free, I fill my glass from the tap and take a sip. Looking in the mirror, my brown hair looks like an unkempt hedge. My hazel eyes are bloodshot. Scratches and stretch marks alternate on my shoulders like tiger stripes. I look like shit.

I think back upon the dream, about Demos. One thing sticks in my mind. His eyes were filled with a vulgar desire. He hated me. For what, I do not know. *Demos*, I repeat to myself. What a terrifying name.

“John” said Green Eyes, “Come back to bed.” I forgot I was “John” tonight. I finished my glass of water, and walked back into the bedroom of my studio apartment. Well, more like bedroom, kitchen, and living room; the joys of living on a budget. I climbed back into bed and cuddle up next to her. She leaned in for a kiss, but remembering the sink, I rolled the other way pretending not to notice. I drifted to sleep. I forgot Demos.

I woke up the next morning and she was already gone. She even cleaned the sink, what a dear. I am not worried about where she is. Women are like stories. Some are novels, others are novellas, and some are short stories. She was more of a haiku.

Months passed. The typical New York bullshit happened around me. The Yankees won the pennant, murders happened, women went missing, and gang shootings; the typical timeline of the Empire State. Demos? I did not think about Demos anymore. It was just a dream- just more vivid, more terrifying, and worst of all, more real.

I started taking bouncing jobs at random bars and clubs. Just taking ID’s and making sure no undesirables got in. I hated undesirables, especially to many a John’s dismay, hookers. I was working at this one place, Lee

Outlaw's, a biker bar the new owner wanted to reform into a classy joint. It was located out on Hempstead Turnpike, near the Coliseum. Before I got there the place was known as a rowdy haven for drugs, prostitutes, and violence. The kind of place I usually avoided unless I was looking for a fight. You never saw any college kids in there; it was all 30 year old bikers and their girlfriends. Leather vests and denim was the dress code, until Vincent bought the place out.

Vincent was my boss, this 30 year old promoter. He always wore a gray or black Armani Suit, with manicured nails. He got his black hair cut every Friday. He was an alright guy, for someone who thought he was the next Frank Sinatra. He was a consummate ladies' man. Always found chatting up some dame by the bar. Never saw him leave with one though. The Chairman of the Board knew how to run a bar, I'll give him that. I was bouncing in one of his other places, Larry's, out in Westbury and he offered me the gig at Outlaw's. It paid more and was closer to my apartment. I took it immediately.

Vincent mandated a collared shirt and a blacklist for anyone who fights or is caught doing drugs. He never said anything about the hookers though. I took care of that myself. It was my job to keep up these standards.

My first day was a cruel joke. Even with a two week grace period, every Tom, Dick and Vincenzo that came in was not wearing a collared shirt. Every asshole had on his denim vest with patches and black t-shirts. I easily turned away 50 people. I got my fair share of "Fuck you's" and people telling me where to stick the collared shirts. Then this one guy comes up to me. He's wearing a black, well fitted collared shirt, but I still needed to see his ID.

"Hey man, I need to see some ID.

"Naw man, c'mon now you know me."

"Come on guy, no ID, no Entry."

"Buddy, you know who I am."

"Yeah guy? Who the fuck are you?"

Black irises met my hazel eyes. I saw something so familiar. "I'm Demos."

I started out of my chair in the corner of my apartment; heart pounding again like so long ago. I checked the clock. 2 am. I was starting my first day at Lee Outlaw's in approximate 12 hours. The TV was blaring the National Anthem, then the snowstorm of static that signaled the end of the programming day. I vacated the rickety wooden chair with its orange cushions. I saunter into the bathroom, looking at the man in the mirror. I saw those eyes again, the dark pure black hatred of his irises. Demos. He came back for me. I thought it was just one nightmare, this was

something more. I pondered my options; it disturbed me that this happened again, and so specific to what was happening in my life. I looked into my own eyes. My whole life I have not really been a religious individual, but my mother had went to church 6 days a week. I wondered what it was she would do in a situation like this. Of course. it's that simple. I would just quit.

I went in early. Vincent was there getting ready for the night. A brunette was interviewing to be a waitress the low-cut blouse showing her excellent resume. "Hey Vincent" I began "I can't work for you anymore, I quit." He was pissed. "Are you fucking kidding me buddy?" Everyone was Vincent's buddy. "You know the position you put me in? Now, I gotta find another bouncer in four hours, do you know how hard it is to find a good bouncer? Nearly fucking impossible." He looked up at Angelo and Demitri. "Get this cocksucker out of here." The other two bouncers picked me up and toss me to the pavement outside. "Yeah, nice knowing you too Vincent." I yelled back as the door slammed shut behind me. I got in my T-bird and drove back home.

I woke up the next morning, head pounding, and walked out to get the Daily News. I turned immediately to the back page; Knicks lost again. I flip to the front and see Lee Outlaw's with police tape out front in the lower left corner "Biker Bar Massacre". The story was almost as succinct.

That night someone pulled a gun, killing three people, Vincent, some girl, and the bouncer who took my place. Good thing I quit.

Sometimes you just know.

"Don't lie to me, Luke. I know what happened. I am here to help you."

I open my eyes. The blinding light of the solitary lamp overhead gives way to cold grey concrete above. I sit up. The green striped mattress below me is stripped of sheets. Suicide watch, I almost forgot. You fall off a roof one time and they think you're suicidal. My nails are worn down to stubs so I start chewing on some of my skin. Oral fixations are hard to break. The bastards won't give me toothpicks.

"Luke, are you listening to me?"

I look up at the mirror in front of me. My head is bare like a cancer patient's. The orange jumpsuit only amplifies my pallid skin. The bright light doesn't help either.

"Luke?"

"I hear you, goddamnit."

"Tell me what happened at the bar."

“I already did. Vincenzo, some girl he was hitting on, and a bouncer got shot.”

“Who shot them?”

“Demos, I assume.”

“You have said this before.” I could picture the Good Doctor laying back into his chair. “but you but still have not told me the truth.”

“What truth is there to tell? I was not at the bar that night.”

I was. I pulled the gun. I shot that punk Vincenzo through the eyes. I shot his girlfriend too. I took the bouncer just for fun. It was all good fun. Fun. Fun. Fun.

Blink.

“What was that you said?” The Good Doctor sounded scared.

“What are you talking about? I didn’t say anything. Maybe you’re the one losing your mind. Perhaps we are just three...”

“Three?”

“...two lost souls. I believe you said I was a lost soul.”

Lost? I am not lost. I have never been more alive. I have been having lots of fun. That first girl was easy. She laying right next me sound asleep. I strangled her supple little neck. I thought it was going to snap. I wanted it to snap. Her emerald green eyes rolled back into her skull. Oh, so much fun. I wonder if this Doctor would be up for fun?

“You’re in here for more than 10 murders, you know that.”

“It wasn’t me.”

“Listen here.” The Good Doctor paused for a moment. I heard a release of breath.

Just like the first. You never forget your first time.

“We found the body behind your apartment. We found two fingers from two different bodies in the glove compartment and trunk of your car. We dragged two bodies from the stream near your apartment and one more body hidden in various engine parts in that broken down blue Impala you dropped off at the junkyard. All hookers. All but one of the bodies had been decomposed no more than a month.”

“It wasn’t me.”

“We have you on film breaking down the door. Literally kicking it off the hinges, then pulling your .22 and shooting all three victims. You emptied the clip.”

“It wasn’t me. Demos did it.” *You’re damn right I did.*

“4 eyewitnesses identified that it was you and you alone.”

“It wasn’t me.”

“Listen, Luke, you’re facing life on either death row or an asylum.” The Good Doctor reminded me for the millionth time. “You deserve the chair sane or not. But, clearly you have some problems. I am here to help you.”

Captain fucking obvious

“I am done talking to you.”

“What happened to your parent’s Luke?”

“I only knew my mom, my father was never around.”

“No Luke, your real parents.”

I dip my head. How does he know? How? How? Nobody but me knows about that. Sure I was adopted. But no one knows why I was orphaned. No one I never told anyone that secret. No. No. Nobody knows. The secret is safe.

“They passed away.”

“You were there when they died weren’t you.”

He knows. This motherfucker knows. Fuck him. Fuck him. I tell him nothing.

“What did you do when you opened the door to their room?”

“Fuck you.”

“Be easy son, I am only trying to help. Just talk to me. Tell me how your father had killed your mother.”

“Fuck you”

The Good Doctor released his breath. “What did you do when you saw your mother tied to the bed? The knife in her heart. The two knives through her hands. The blood gushing from her side. Your father, hanging from the bedpost by his tie; unable to live knowing his wife was a prostitute.”

“I stared.”

“That’s all?”

“There was nothing I could do.” *It was beautiful.*

“Tell me...”

I stared. It could have been 5 minutes. It could have been hours. Hours of staring into my mothers green eyes staring lifeless back at me. I heard nothing. I saw nothing but her green eyes. The next thing I remember is the tall, muscular, and dark eyed man grabbing me in his arms. He carried me away. He freed me. I asked him his name.

“Demos” he said.