

(Excerpt from ‘Pinned! – An Injustice in Kentucky’ – Charles W. Massie)

She went into the kitchen and got herself another drink and then came back outside and loaded up another bowl. I realized that at this rate, it was no wonder we had to continually restock the liquor cabinet. Even though I wasn't really counting, I could tell by her swagger that Roxie was starting to get boxed again.

“You mentioned something about the guy who shot himself the other night.” I asked. “How did he end up here?”

“Terry.” She mused. “Terry was a great old man that I met in the nursing home when I worked there. He loved me and used to get me presents all the time. He hated the nursing home because he was pretty independent and had to give up his double-wide trailer when he got so bad that he couldn't take care of himself.”

“Was he bedridden?” I asked.

“No, as a matter of fact he was quite mobile. I finally asked him if he would like to live with me at this house. It was a lot cheaper than the money he was paying the nursing home and I could take better care of him. He jumped at the chance and moved in about a week afterward. Between the money I made at the nursing home and the money he paid me for living here, I was doing alright.”

“He must have had a few bucks himself.” I commented.

“Oh yes, he had quite a little nest egg. He felt sorry for me having to pay the mortgage on the house after my divorce, so he went out, got qualified and bought this house from me.”

“Wait a minute. I thought you owned this house.”

“Technically I do,” She said. “He gave me this house on a quit-claim deed before he died. He said that if anything ever happened to him, he wanted to make sure I had a place to live.”

“How long did he last?”

“He died about a week later. He blew his brains out with a shotgun. I told you that story.”

“Well, I'm confused,” I said, “why would a man get a mortgage on a house and then kill himself.”

“A lot can happen with thread.” She remarked.

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, forget it. You know how I sometimes ramble; especially when I drink. Let's talk about something else. How long were you married Mark?”

“We were married for 4 years but the relationship was a lot longer,” I said. “We dated on and off for 10 years then she got married. I moved out to Washington State for work and when I came back a year later, she was going through a divorce. We hooked up again and lived together for 3 years before getting married.”

“Why did you get divorced?” Roxie asked.

“When I got married, my wife was a manager in Kmart.” I said. “Shortly afterward, she quit her job and was taking a series of low paying jobs that put her on the road a lot. She was doing inventory control jobs.

Meanwhile, I was busting my ass trying to manage two appliance stores. We had sold our house and were living in an apartment complex. She started having an affair with the guy that lived below us. Plus, both of us were pretty good at hitting the bottle, so the combination spelt disaster.”

“Did you ever cheat on her?” She asked.

“Never,” I said. “I had plenty of opportunity and one time she came into a local bar and I was talking with some barfly. She went ballistic. But truth was, I never cheated.”

“I cheated twice when I was married.” she told me, “my ex was out of town a lot and I just got lonely living here all alone.”

“Were they just a sexual fling or a regular affair?” I asked.

“One was just a fling but the other was going on until I moved back here in the spring.” She admitted. “He’s a public official and he’s married, so we had to be pretty careful.”

“Well, that’s one way to keep the law off your back,” I said, “unless, of course, you liked him on your back.”

“You are one sick son of a bitch,” She said. “Why does everything have to be a joke to you?”

“What?” I questioned. “You’re bitching because I’m witty?”

“No, Mark,” she continued. “I’m bitching because you think you have to be a comedian all the time. I get sick of it.”

“Sorry,” I said.

I really didn’t think I should have to put up with this kind of verbal abuse, just because I was quick with a comeback. As a matter of fact, she had frequently said that I was the funniest guy she had ever dated and now I’m finding out that she is sick of my wit. I couldn’t help wonder what else she was sick of.

“Look,” I said, “I’m sorry if I offended you in some way. My wit has always been sharp and sometimes it’s faster than my brain works. But it was just a snappy comeback and I didn’t mean anything personal. But you’re the one that had the affair, not me.”

“Fuck you asshole.” She shouted.

She got up and bolted into the house. I sat there in amazement and wondered whether or not I had made a mistake about Roxie’s mental state. She flipped from hot to cold in a heartbeat and at this particular moment she was in hot mode. There is no way that anyone should have taken offense to a truthful statement like I made.

Like the old story goes; sometimes the truth hurts, But damn it, it wasn’t my fault ... I guess there won’t be any sugar cookies for Mark tonight.

And I was still bothered by our earlier conversation about her ex-roommate Terry. Something just did not add up and she was way too quick to get off the subject. Had Terry been her lover also? It seemed hard to believe that she would tie up with a 78-year-old man but for all I knew, he belonged to the Viagra club. Stranger things have happened.

That night I slept on the couch to avoid provoking more confrontation with Roxie. Maybe it was the alcohol or maybe she had a degree of bi-polarity. Either way, I wasn't going to do anything to accelerate her obvious mood swings.

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