

'Note'

2200 words

“That was the a-hole,” Wilson said, putting down the phone.

“Speaking of the devil, eh?” Tim said.

“Guy now’s telling me *I’m* the one who should be ashamed,” Wilson said.

“Yeah but give me that part again? You told *him* he should be ashamed . . . what was the reason?”

Wilson squinted at Tim. “Before I conclude that *you’re* getting on my nerves . . . *what* the fuck did you just ask?”

“Take it easy,” Tim said. “All’s I’m trying to establish, what it was he’s turning around on you. You’re becoming tougher to follow. Maybe ease up on it a while.”

“Ease *up*?”

Tim didn’t say anything. A golf ball came in their direction and fell short, no direct threat, though you did have to keep your eyes open out here. They were in

Wilson's backyard in Rohnert Park, nice open expanse behind you, except when golfing was in session, since it was the south 9 holes of the municipal course, meaning full of hackers.

"Ah Jeez," Wilson said, "*I'm* sorry man. This case *is* getting to me. Last thing I meant to imply, you're the enemy too."

"*Case* now though," Tim said. "Like I said, your mental health may not be worth it here."

"Well . . . you're not in my shoes, are you Bud."

"See there you go. There's no chance . . . right? . . . that you'd progress to physically attacking this guy or something."

"Come on, *dog*. What do you think I am?"

"Okay," Tim said. "So we got that aspect handled . . . I think."

"Oh, so you're not even with me there?"

"Nah like I said. You mostly convinced me, you're limiting your rage to civil activity."

Wilson said, "Thing that really hits a nerve? This guy re-directing on me."

"Second time now you mentioned that," Tim said.

“That’s all Trump,” Wilson said.

“Aanh?”

“Your boy. Guy’s replicating him. You put him in office.”

“Okay we better rein it in now,” Tim said, “I’m happy to humor you to a point, but not off the deep end.”

“Scum bag projects,” Wilson said. “Spends his day tweeting. Accusing everyone else of what *he’s* guilty of, and he knows it.”

“Your guy now, or still Trump?”

“Trump, and then my piece of garbage picking up on the angle. Telling me to look in the mirror, is why he defaulted on the loan. Can you believe this?”

“I’ll admit,” Tim said, “I had some tenants once . . . you know my downstairs, where we got the ping pong table and shit now?”

“Yeah. An in-law set-up. Granny, whatever.”

“So they stopped paying. I hate litigation but I had no choice, went through the channels with the sheriff, and by the end not only the guy, but the whole family,

they're blaming *me* for why they couldn't come up with the rent."

"So you're making my case," Wilson said, "what's your problem?"

"Yeah, but then I start thinking, was I overcharging 'em? Was I sympathetic, when their situation may have changed? . . . Might be something you need to look at. *Your* guy."

Wilson said, "I'm telling you man, I'm liable to pick up something and hit you with it."

"Dude I'm just reacting honest. Nothing personal."

Wilson said, "I saved the idiot, is what I did. Calls me up a year ago sobbing that I'm ruining it for his family if I *don't* make the loan. So against my better instincts, I go through with it."

Tim was rubbing his chin. "Well I guess one way," he said, "is you make it with his wife. That could achieve a measure of payback."

Wilson shifted around in his patio chair. "What are you, a wise guy now? And that would get my money back--how?"

“It may not,” Tim said, “just throwing it out there for fun . . . On the Donald deal though, before you get your tit in a wringer like the dumb Libs?”

“Unh?”

“We’re looking at four more years. Fortunately. Reason being, your key voters are scared they’re gonna lose their guns. Doesn’t matter what they think of Trump.”

“Oh yeah?”

“So my advice to you in *that* department--deal with it my friend . . . I know it's off-topic, but I couldn't let that go, since you stirred it up.”

Tim finished it off with a smug look Wilson had seen before . . . a *that's that* type thing. There was a fireman down in the city he used to play handball with, and that guy'd stick you with the same look after he kicked your ass on the outdoor court in Golden Gate Park.

There was a golf club leaning against the house, a putter. Wilson had a putting green set up in the side yard, one hole, astro turf carpet. That'd be a little extreme though. So he stood up, made an old-fashioned

fist, smiled at Tim, and--why not--hit him in the side of the jaw.

Tim tilted sideways out of his chair onto his rear end, more surprised than hurt probably, since Wilson wasn't feeling it too bad in the knuckles, unlike the couple times in his life he'd *legitimately* hit someone . . . and Tim mumbled something about knowing you were fucking crazy and this confirms it and got the hell out of there.

A couple days went by and nothing was going to change with the loan default business, that's for sure, so Wilson figured what would it hurt to take a ride down to Tracy.

That was another thing. He'd fallen for the mope being successful in a new venture, hay bale houses. The guy claimed he was developing a neighborhood there, he and his brother, and they had investors from Kansas City, and there was glossy paperwork detailing just how much better insulated and biodegradable their units were than your run of the *mill* new homes.

Wilson had skimmed all that, figured there was probably a gimmick in there somewhere, but the guy had to be stable enough to at least pay a dang mortgage.

Even the guy claiming he couldn't get a legit one from a bank because his tax returns showed negative income--explaining to Wilson how it is in business, you roll money back in, try *not* to show a profit, that's the point--that kind of made sense.

Even though Wilson's gut told him maybe not.

So here you were, pulling up to the guy's house now, the one you loaned the \$300k on.

And fine, the thing *was* worth more than that, which Tim had been trying to calm him down about . . . that if you *had* to foreclose on the prick and then throw him out and re-sell the place--all that mess--you *should* get your original money back . . . but that was beside the point.

The first thing Wilson didn't like, taking in the scene here at 1320 Arrow Drive in Tracy--a late-model Mercedes SUV sitting there gleaming in the driveway, with a good-sized boat up high next to it. Classy

mahogany finish on the thing, the tight script on the stern informing you her name was *Offshore Marauder*.

Wilson had no idea if he actually had high blood pressure but recently he felt it going up. He didn't like doctors, preferred to get his medical information off the internet. There was a New Zealand report that tart cherry juice maybe did the job, so he kept a jar of softgels in the glove compartment and grabbed a couple now and gulped them down.

Something else he was doing more of lately-- deciding life's too short . . . and he got out, crossed the street and rang the fucker's doorbell.

It sounded like people were running around in there and the noise stopped and a sweaty kid opened the door and Wilson asked if his dad was around, and the kid said no but his mom's upstairs, and Wilson said if you wouldn't mind.

The kid called up to her and went back to roughhousing with his friends, and Wilson remembered those days, no complications and you had all this energy.

"Yes may I help you," the mom was saying, coming down the hall, and before Wilson answered she

recognized him and said, “*Willie*, it’s been so long, it’s nice to see you. Won’t you please come in?”

And this was the thing about the mom, Brianna, she was so darn nice that all these years you never knew if she was putting you on. Even now, there was a reasonable chance she knew nothing about the mortgage default, that that was all the husband’s business. Gus.

Brianna was wearing a flowery low-cut blouse, the way she did it back then too when she was first dating the idiot. She was fuller in the upper body now, her waist was shorter. Same skinny legs. Her display was probably innocent enough, but still, giving you that glimpse, a hint.

Wilson said, “How about a cup of coffee?” Not making a move to come in. She picked up on it, considered it, and put up a finger to excuse herself a minute . . . and when she returned she had her purse and a light jacket.

“They old enough to stay by themselves?” Wilson said.

“Borderline,” Brianna said, “but my daughter’s home. She babysits.”

There was a place in a strip mall she said was good, and Wilson followed her over there, and the coffee wasn’t hot enough, they served it out of these dumb thermoses, but you could talk.

Brianna said, “This isn’t like, the start of some kind of intervention, is it?”

Wilson said, “Hey, you never know. Should it be?”

She said, “Gus does enjoy his cocktails. If it’s one of those. But usually it’s the immediate family doing the intervening.”

“Yeah, and catching you off guard . . . how’s the marriage otherwise?”

She said, “You know you’re being very forward Willie. And I’m detecting hostility.”

“Remember the time,” he said, “that party, we almost, *you* know.”

“No,” she said.

“But you do. It would have happened, except for there was no available privacy. All we needed, a half hour, or in my case an hour, but same thing.”

“And you are truly full of yourself,” she said.

“I'm recalling we even went down to the basement, the laundry room they had where you could close a door. Two other folks already had the same idea unfortunately. Lot of reefer floating around that night.”

Brianna was shaking her head.

“What?” Wilson said. “It wouldn't have worked out anyway . . . or, I'm making it up . . . or, what are you doing here with this clown. Which one?”

She took her time and said, “The only part you have remotely correct is Gus was behaving badly that night.”

“Fine . . . so, you wanted to get back at him. Or if that's too strong, you weren't going to lose sleep if it happened . . . That in the ballpark?”

She smiled. “It must be a real hoot going through life a know-it-all.”

Wilson said, “Leaving that alone. Someone suggested I try to make it with you this time around, to press a point.”

She kept it cool. “That's from a movie,” she said.

“I thought of that too,” he said. “The doofuses have the fender-bender outside the car dealer. Both too stubborn to admit any degree of fault.”

She said, “I’m not going to do anything with you. If you really were serious. Which I doubt.”

“I wasn’t sure. Now that I’m here, no. You’re a little worn out . . . I had my chances back then and screwed it up, is the bottom line.”

Brianna didn’t absorb that one as well. “Like to see *you* try having a couple kids,” she said.

“No you *look* fine, that’s not it,” he said.

“Oh, I see.”

“Right.”

She said, “And you know . . . if I did do something with you . . . you’d *never* get paid.”

“Ah, so you do know about that. But it’d backfire, you’re saying.”

“Most certainly. You know my husband.”

“Unh-huh. Thing of it is, it’s already backfiring. So I figured have some fun anyway, what’s there to lose? My friend Tim, that was the only part of his advice made any sense.”

She said, "Except you're not feeling it."

"Not at all."

She said, "You can't at least . . . give me a sense of what you mean by that?"

Wilson said, "All I can tell you Babe, the full package isn't quite ready for prime shipping."

Brianna got up and cleared her place and said, "Thanks a lot Willie. Thanks for nothing. Ass-hole."

"Gee," he said, "I didn't remember that kind of temper on you."

She said, "You're going to want to talk to Gus I assume. He should be home in twenty minutes."

"Nah, thanks, I don't need to. Driving down here, I came up with a Plan B. It might surprise him."

"I thought *I* was Plan B," she said.

"Oh yeah, you're right . . . Plan C then," he said.