

Bourne toWrite...

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The Big Silence

by Nick Barrett

“Anyway, what about your story,” ‘Lazy’ Jones was asking, after bending my ear for ten minutes explaining this heist that couldn’t fail. As he grinned I was reminded of a photo I found in an encyclopedia in a penitentiary library, under ‘Rictus’.

Which suited the surroundings, the Room of Remembrance in the Forest Glade mortician’s salon, which also suited our need for a private talk. Three oversized goons faced me, leaning against a coffin, all packing heavy pieces I noted, trying to look menacing. I yawned.

Lazy went on: “ Maybe you’re the guy I’m looking for, maybe not. Tell me about yourself.” I could tell you all about him and his buddies already. Half-assed wanna-be-a-gangster low-lives. Crazy payroll heist plan they had using hearses was likely to get them killed. I’ve had an itch on my ass with better survival prospects than these dopes.

This was an interview I had to ‘fail’. I was repaying a big favour to Joey ‘Slowballs’ Snow, who owed Lazy money. Joey promised he’d find extra muscle for this heist. Nobody would trust Slowballs to heist his own pants, so he couldn’t seriously volunteer himself.

But Jones didn’t like the first guy. Slowballs was also in debt to him, which was why he said he’d find him a big paying heist, to get to keep his kneecaps.

So piss Lazy off just enough to not get the job, was all I had to do. The silent treatment should work, I figured. Dumbass here picks the other guy then they can get on with this bullshit scheme they thought was going to make them rich, more likely dead.

What about my story though? I wouldn't know where to start and I don't know how it ends, but the middle bit is having its moments.

Lazy wasn't giving up. "What's your story, man? We all got a story. Maybe if I don't like yours it ends here though." Now he's playing at gangsters, I reckoned. On cue, the three goons shuffled their feet, shifting weight as though they had come alert. One of them drops his piece, a heavy Colt automatic. I kept up the silent-and-probably-stupid act, passing the time wondering how clowns like these survive at all.

"Joey Slowballs told me you were a stand up guy, handy with his fists, can use a gun, good driver, cool head. Done a stretch with him." No denial from me.

"Listen, the guys putting the money up for this need my guarantee you gonna do what you gotta do when the time comes. I need to know more, what's your story?"

"OK, you ain't saying much; but I like that." That rictus grin again. "That's a prime requirement for this team." Suddenly this was not going according to my script.

"You're in, my man. And the job's brought forward, we're gonna do it right now."

Which drops me straight into the sticky stuff again; that's my story right there.