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It's 11:15, and his trailer's hot as hell. Garth Freely isn't feeling well; however, interestingly enough, he's not feeling 'not well' either. He isn't really sure how he feels. All he knows is that, right now, he needs a beer...or six. Stumbling to the refrigerator in nothing but a pair of old, torn boxers, he's relieved to find that it's stocked with PBR, as always. Getting laid off after ten years of management duty hadn't made for a good day, but his psychologist, Dr. Pabst, was about to make it all better.

Making his way back to the recliner, he considers his options: a miserable night of Judge Mathis, a miserable night of Nascar, or a miserable night of no TV at all. Laughing at fact that he even considered the last option, he plops down into his off-brand La-Z-Boy, not minding the butt-imprints from its pre-Goodwill owners. Pressing the power button and popping the top off his first bottle, he's ready to escape reality—even if just for the night. As the tube warms, and the picture slowly appears, he gladly welcomes the rumbling of engines. Yes, Nascar's on—his favorite way to spend a relaxing night in front of the tube. His worries begin to fade—eyes glued to the television—genuinely impressed with the sheer power of the cars, and their ever-amazing ability to make left turns. He's so immersed that he doesn't even notice the growing pile of empty bottles at the base of the recliner. By the time he does, he's too drunk

to care. Wobbling his way back to the fridge, he hopes he hasn't drained his resources. After grabbing another ice-cold antidepressant, something comes alive within him: an idea—a wonderful, stress-relieving idea.

It had been hanging there, staring him right in the face, the entire time. He can't believe he didn't think of it before. If it's one thing he's proud of, it's his Southern heritage. After all, he didn't park his house in the beautiful hills of Alabama for nothing. And he knows good and well that if there's one thing a true Southern boy (and any respectable Southern girl) loves even more than Nascar, it's their gun. Lifting Mrs. Luanne from her rack, he feels a tear begin to form in his eye—this is going to be a beautiful, beautiful night. Gun in hand, he throws on the old wife-beater he'd worn to work, slips on his shoes, grabs all his empty bottles, and makes his way towards the door. But the sweet, alluring action of the race draws him right back in. Eh, it's almost over, he figures...gotta know who wins.

“Garth...Garth...GARTH! OH MA GAWD, what are you doing?” Dianne, Garth's wife, stands at the front door. She remains motionless as she stares at her now unemployed husband, sitting there with a beer in one hand and a shotgun in the other.

He simply points to the bottles, back to the gun, and smiles. “Oh, babe, don't

worry. I was just gonna...”

Becoming sympathetic, yet still cautious, she takes a few steps towards him. “Shug...everything’s going to be just fine. Why don’t you just put down the gun, and I’ll go in the kitchen and cook you up some Spam and grits—I’ll even put Easy Cheesey on ‘em, just how you like it!”

A little confused, he figures she’s just worried about him making a mess of the bottles. “Well, good God, there won’t be too much of a mess...I’m going outside. I figured you’d rather have something blown to bits than just sitting around the house all the time.”

Tears begin to swell in her eyes. “Garth, baby, you listen to me, ok? Yes, I would rather have that *something* sitting around the house, because I love that *something*. It’s going to be ok. You don’t have to do this. Sure, you spent ten years at Lady Margalese’s Adult Video Emporium, but it’s nothing to kill yourself over—you still have me.”

She continues to attempt to reason with him, but the alcohol has already gone to his brain. He’s way too drunk to understand her concern, and way too drunk to care. As he grows increasingly frustrated, it begins to happen—the same thing that always happens when he’s drunk. Hateful, vindictive thoughts begin to swirl through his head, and he’s reminded of just how much he hates

his wife—standing there, likes she’s better than him, ruining his night. But this was the last straw. Tonight, Garth has the gun. Tonight is Garth’s night. He angles his shotgun down, pressing the barrel directly between her eyes. “I’m going outside. I think I need some fresh air.” She nods, silently, remaining motionless—minus the slight quivering of her lower lip.

It had always been her nervous tick. No matter how strong or courageous she tried to appear, that one lip always gave her away. It was the same lip that had given her away on their first date. It was there, that morning at the Shoney’s breakfast bar, that he had fallen head-over-heels for those brown eyes, curly orange hair, and blue-frosted lashes. Nevertheless, that was then and this is now. He’s laid off, he’s drunk, and he’s pissed. It’s time to settle the score.

Pushing all the positive nostalgia back into a deep, forgotten corner of his mind, he becomes increasingly passionate about his plan for revenge. He debates with himself as to where he should do it. In the woods, maybe? Out in public? The sound of his marriage breaking apart, he imagines, will be so much sweeter than the sound of those bottles. Wherever it ends up happening, he knows it’s time. He had caught Dianne with almost a dozen guys, just in the past week. She had sworn, that morning at Shoney’s, that her prostitution days were over—he should have known better. It was time to end it all, but not

here...not now. With one quick jab, the butt of his gun puts her to sleep.

She's been out for hours when light finally begins to creep back into her eyes. The blood running from her temple clouds her vision, and all she can see is wood—everywhere. At first, she panics, thinking that Garth has left her in the woods to die. However, she's quickly relieved by the sight of ZZ Top posters and plastic-coated furniture. It isn't wood she's looking at—it's wood grain. She knows these walls well, and these walls know her. She's beaten, gagged, and tied up at none other than 'Killer' Clay's. Clay, secretly one of her clients, has been Garth's best friend for fifteen years. Wanted in five states for hate crimes, he's the go-to man for guns, knives, traps, and grenades. As long as you don't wear a tie or ride a bicycle, he'll hook you up with any weapon you could ever need to skin your cat...or your wife. Her lip, though now numb, begins to quiver once again while they examine the workings of what seems to be a small game trap. She can't make out exactly what they're saying, but it can't be good.

"This one right here's hand-crafted." He spits a small amount of chew out of his over-stuffed mouth. "Thirty-seven razor sharp teeth 'ill sink into yer leg like BLAM! Heh heh heh, guess you won't be knockin' on my door again after that, holy boy."

"Good God, Clay."

“Yep. A man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do. I don’t get no damn privacy around here! I can’t even live on my own damn land in peace without some Bible-thumpin kids knocking on my door, trying to scare me with all their jibber-jabber hoodoo nonsense.” He looks at the ground, spits out a little more chew, and nods disappointingly. “It’s a damn shame, I tell ya...a damn shame.” His face begins to lighten up as he lifts the trap up into the air. “But not no more. I’ve taken care of that little problem...heh heh. Some call ‘em Mormons. Some call ‘em Jehovah’s Weetnaysus’es. But ya know what I call em? Dead!”

Garth begins to realize that he’s not getting his point across. “So this’ll teach her a lesson, right? Clay?”

Laughing so hard that murky drool is beginning to drip down his chin, he hardly hears Garth’s question. “Whew, boy I tell ya, sometimes I crack myself up. I call ‘em dead...heh heh heh...”

“CLAY!”

“Oh...sorry, sorry. Now what were we talkin’ bout again? Oh yeah, the trap—thirty-seven teeth just ready to bite. It’d take one of those tie-wearing pricks out before he even knew what hit him. You should wake up ol’Dianne over dere, and we’ll see if we can’t catch us one of them Bible-thumpers. If ya didn’t smack the gal around so much, maybe she’d be awake right naw.”

“It’s you that needs to wake up, you dumbass! It’s her I want to torture! Her I want to kill! Her I want to teach a damn lesson!”

A look more awkward than a middle urinal suddenly comes across Clay’s face. “Woah, hoss! Wait just a second there...”

“No, I’ve done caught her sleepin’ around with half the damn neighborhood! I had to duke it out with ol’ Douglas just last week...and he’s seventy-seven! How much could she get, Clay?! Huh? Huh?”

“Come on now, Garth. She’s the best in town—everybody knows it. You can’t blame her, business is business.”

At first, Garth appears confused, but his face quickly begins to turn a shade of red Clay had never seen before—more red than the blood of all the witnesses he’d ever killed, and more red than the words of God they uttered during their final breaths. “Wait a sec...Clay, how do y...You mean you...”

The blood still clouds her vision, but what little of the scene she can see is horrific. He’s scattered everywhere—the ceiling, the walls, the floor, and all over Garth’s smirking face. The trap had fit snugly over Clay’s face, silencing his prayers (and apologies to ‘God’s gracious and holy messengers’) with a single ‘*Clap.*’ Garth’s face is ruthless—so pleased, yet indifferent. After wiping some of the Clay from his face, he grabs his wife by the hair and—dragging her

through the carnage—makes his way to the door. He’s frustrated, and he’s tired. Not to mention, she’d made him miss the last few laps of the race. Realizing that he was going to have to do it himself, he drags her back to the trailer and throws her onto the bed. The television is still on, casting an eerie glow—outlining his towering, bloody figure. Her lip quivers so violently that she can feel the gag moving.

“Alright, babe, it’s time for this to end where it all began—right here, where you destroyed our love. I bet you don’t even care, do ya? It’s all about getting your fix, isn’t it?” His voice begins to crack, and his face softens. “So, what? Am I just not good enough for ya?”

“Mmmmmmm...Mmmm...MMMM!” She desperately tries to mutter a few words, but it’s useless—the gag is too tight.

After untying her, he presses the gun into her forehead and motions for her to take off her clothes. “Alright, take ‘em off. Come on, hurry up. What...you’ll do it for Clay, and the rest of the neighborhood, but you don’t wanna do it for me? Huh? No, you take ‘em off...you’re gonna dance for me one mo’time before you go out. Come on, show me whatcha got!” She slowly unbuttons her shirt. Pausing, she looks directly at him, with tears in her eyes. However, he’s not impressed. “Come on now, honey...take it off.”

As she nervously steps out of her pants, Garth's face begins to soften once again. He lowers his gun, standing completely still, eyes fixed on her underwear. "Twent...twent...twenty-four?" Still gagged, she silently nods. "Gordon? What happened to Kyle Busch? Wait, did you get those for m..." Once again she nods—tears now pouring from her eyes.

Kissing her through the gag, Garth also begins to cry. It's all becoming clear to him now—he'd been so drunk, he'd forgotten what day it was. His boss hadn't told him to pack up and go home because he was loosing his job, but because it was his birthday. His wife hadn't been a whore, she had simply worked as hard as she could to try and make enough money to buy his beautiful birthday present, which he loved ever so much.

With Miss Luanne still in hand, they fall to the bed, locking lips so hard that they can hardly breath. Garth slowly slips his birthday present down his wife's legs, and throws them over his head. They land on top of the television, which is still on, providing them with enough light to make sure they both give each other very 'sincere apologies.' He doesn't notice though, his head's in the clouds. Rolling beneath the sheets with the love of his life, he can't remember the last time he was this happy.

He lifts her up, grabbing her by her waist, and kisses her even harder. After

scratching him gently across the chest with her long blue nails, she slowly backs away and motions for him to come closer. Before he even has time to make his way across the bed, she grabs him, yanking his body up to hers.

In the heat of the moment, Miss Luanne releases.

She's scattered everywhere—the ceiling, the walls, the floor, and all over Garth's shocked, emotionless face. For a moment, everything is silent—all but the occasional drip of Dianne from the ceiling, and down the walls.

He remains motionless, staring blankly at the stained walls. The room glows golden as the light from the television seeps through the 24's on his birthday present. He falls face-down to the bed, gagging violently, serenaded only by the booming voices of ESPN broadcasters, as static electricity pops across the last remaining memory of his wife:

“Tonight on SportsCenter: four-time Winston Cup champion Jeff Gordon and his wife, Brooke, meet with lawyers this week to begin filing for divorce. In a statement issued to reporters on Tuesday, Brooke stated that even though she has loved Gordon for the past seven long years, there some things not even love can fix...”