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Tony Knoderer

ABOUT THE GRASS

Listen. You guys. Listen to me. Listen.

Now, I'm, look out there. Now. What do you see.

Lawyers. Because, ambulance chasers. Right? *Ambulance* chasers.

So. Yeah.

You wouldn't though. Not chasin. They'll be there *waitin* for me.

Shit, was it on TV though. I just thought. Was it on there, because, if it was. And then it's on the news, on tape.

Do you know though? Because, if it was.

My family, like my parents. I could probably just, tell em. Say hey, I leaned over too far. Like everybody does. They reach over and, but, I went over. Hips just got hooked on the rail there.

That's the truth too. And they'd laugh, but, we'd *laugh*.

People at work though.

My family, they'd have a story they'd tell against me. Like the day my brother. Listen. Like the day my brother brushed his teeth with shampoo. *Damn that's salty*. He said that.

And over at the company though. They'll smile, but it'll be that look. Like hey that's funny, but I know though really, what's your problem, what it was. And that look. In the eyes? Like I pity you man, deep down. Right? Where it just comes out, and you can see it.

Because, you know where I'm at though, at work? Where I'm *at*, at *work*. They got me out in the middle, in a cubicle. And they all just, come by, whenever they want. And they will too, on Monday.

But you get these big things, up top. Compartments. Up over the desk, with the doors. You can keep stuff, lock it away. That's what I was thinkin, this morning. Take a couple bottles, just beer, when I left my apartment. And I put em in my pockets, in my coat. And so I go.

And, I had another one though, before that. Which is where I got the whole, the idea. Because, when you open the fridge. And somethin inside

there looks at you? Calls your name. Or you just see each other. And so you try it.

Yeah. And.

So.

Yeah.

I was thinkin about Gary though, before I go. I get this little bottle. What was it.

And no, but I stick it in there, with the beer. In the pockets. *Here*. There. In my jacket. Look. You guys.

When they release me though, from the hospital. And people start comin, to see how I am. And people I know. And they find out I'm fine. And then everyone's, what the hell *were* you man, *doin* down there.

Jesus though. If I knew Gary didn't want any. We got tickets to a ballgame, from the lady, up in, upstairs, at work. And it's Friday anyway. Right?

And I don't even see the guy, till he comes in my cube. About, eleven. Well I already, I got the beers *down*, waitin for him. And he's sayin something. But, it's how he was, askin me like he's in some meeting he's always in. Like we're in the boardroom. What about this, and this. You know. Walkin the walk, and the talk, and the whole thing.

He leans in my cube like that, like he's not even stopped from, where he's goin. That's how he does. Like he wasn't, doesn't want to get stuck, or he'll get held in one place. Then he stays there hangin against my wall. My little cloth, partition. Just one moment. He's lookin at me.

And then, when people were comin by. Everybody, comin by. And, I was tellin everybody, every person, should gave *you* the ticket, should gave *you* the ticket.

What tickets? You know.

And, it's lunchtime. And Alan. He's got the one, few spaces down, the cube, from mine. And he says we're goin, a few of us. To get lunch. So yeah, we get all together. There by Don. Don's office. Don's got an office.

Who should drive. They all look at me. Bust out laughin. Not *busted* out, but, they laugh though. And, I make sure and say. Was it then though, or did

I already? Somethin about I can't drive. The air in my car. And a little, little quieter now. Like more to themselves.

And, but, Hattie came up to me.

Hattie. What'd she say. Nice old lady. Been there forever. You know. Mother hen. Although, she can't look it though. If she's not really, bein nice.

Because, and she says, maybe you could leave early. She's sayin it. Get the early start, to the game.

And Don, next to me. He says yeah, good idea. And, but Hattie, she's goin to Gary's office. And she comes back. He's not there he's not there.

Maybe he's in a meeting. I think Don says it.

But Monday. Watch. Like they saw it, this whole, *thing* comin.

I called Gary's house though. That's the other part. Went to my cube, and I call him. His answer, his machine, clicks on while I'm sittin there. I say what, where *are* you. Then, hell with it, I just drove out to his house. And, I drive out there. And I go up to his door, and I knock. He's not there. And I just kept knockin.

Feels stupid too. Stand at someone's door, knockin, and they don't answer. Then I just, start yellin, through the door. Yellin his name. Because I'm, picture him in there. Not hidin, just in there, doin whatever. Sortin through his mail.

I can see him too. If the police came? Dragged me away? And I'm out there bangin. I can see him. Here he is. He comes out, walks by me. Ollie my friend, how are you. That.

I didn't know *what* I was doin then. What now. But, I got two tickets. And what, five hours? So I go downtown. Just go. Thinkin I'd stop at the stadium, in the front there. Sell my extra, one of those guys that always stands there, buyin and sellin.

You know that bar though? Downtown? Wayne's? I'm sittin at the bar there. And there's this, Kim somethin. And, I'm tellin her, about my day. And how I'm, here I am, alone, all that.

She says hey I'll take that ticket.

And I'm saying *oh*, well *good*.

Kim though.

Kim? Kim.

She, I don't know. Something about her face. Older lady. Older than, whatever. Mid-forties. Late forties. Pretty. Or she was. You know. She *was*.

But yeah. I gave her the ticket. And she said she'd drive. So.

She wasn't, like a *fan*. Because, we were in the first row, because of the company. And, we were sittin down the line aways. First base line. And I said. What was it. Hope you got your ballglove. She just looks at me.

We had a good time though. She liked when they, when the crowd cheered. When the guys run out at the start. So she'd be up.

And then it was everything. Ball one. Yeeeee. Ball two.

Strike two. Yeeea.

Kim.

She left for a couple beer runs. And this one time she came back, and I said okay. Watch this. And she's walkin along the thing, the row, toward me. And, I'm lookin at her strange. I said wait a minute, wait a minute. While she's standin over me. She's got her hands full.

Somethin on your butt.

She says really.

And I say yeah yeah. And she turns around.

Hmmm. I brush my hands over, on her ass. Feelin it as I go. You know.

She turns around, finally. And she says heeyyy.

But that gets you, lets you, start gettin your ideas about her. Limits and things.

One came rollin though, a ball, down under us. About, what. It's three feet down. Four feet. I look at her. *That's* why. I said *that's* why you bring your glove. And, I tell her this, and she's smilin. Like she wants to figure this out.

But, you've seen that. On TV? People leanin over for em, those ground balls, when they roll past. And you can see their *backs* sometimes, they're leanin so far.

Well I stand up, next one. It wasn't that close but, I'm up, showin her. And, I lean over, and *wow*. And for a second it was a big question.

I pull myself up though. Sit down for a minute. That's what you're thinkin though. It only *feels* like it.

I'm thinkin about, rollercoasters, like that. Where you think for a minute, and then you just, come back down okay. And you think *oh*, you know, *hell*.

Kim's smilin at me. She looks at me. She said somethin like. Like. That was *wild*.

Next time, about, the sixth inning. I got up and, *reached*. Reachin out. But that's all. And I sit down. And I'm lookin at her. She's smilin but, you can see it. She's thinkin hey reach out, grab a prize for your honey.

So, next time, she's grabbin my arm. And it's not even close. But that's how she is. *Here it is here it is*. Every time.

I don't even, I don't want to *talk* about the rest. Really because, I start thinkin about it, in this big rush. How I was reachin for it, and fallin, and then everything. And my hips, hangin on that, top of that rail. I remember that. And how I'm there thinkin this is it this time. And then *no* no.

You can remember it too, that one second. Because, you can, you're thinkin different things. Like that fat guy, next to you. He won't move up and pull me over. And you're thinkin you're hangin there a long time. But it isn't because, at the same time, you're fallin too. You stand up, and you're leanin, and you wonder, if you're fallin, and, but, you *are*, goin down now too. So I don't know.

But, I remember all that.

Picture some guy just watchin though. Some guy, just, somewhere in that place. Then think. *Thousands* of people too. And then you down there.

Listen though. How you remember.

I was thinkin I got a, a *chance* for this ball. And then no I don't. Too far down. Too far away. And then it's, this is it. And then all that other.

And it's like, there's nothing else but you, in the world. Like the whole time it's only been you anyway. And, but now you know it, that moment. Because, it's, you can't think about anything, except what you're thinkin. You know. And how it feels.

But when I *hit* though. It doesn't hurt. It *hurts* but, it doesn't. Not *hurt*.

But it knocks you, in a different way. You hit, and you just, *think*. Well. I

should get up. But it's a jolt too. It's your face. So close to your brain or somethin.

So I'm layin there. And I'm waitin, for my mind to come back. And Kim. She might have been, but, I don't know. Callin me. *Somethin* was tellin me.

Because, if somethin's tryin to tell you something, for long enough. Right? One time you hear.

So I'm layin there. Holy *shit*. I need to get *up*.

And, I'm too embarrassed though. I'll get up and people start clappin. Or they'll cheer.

I'll get up. Here's what it is. I'll get up and, all these people. There they are, waitin for me. Laughin, smilin. Waitin for me to get up, climb back over.

I'm, I thought about that too. While I'm down there. If you *think* about it. Fall over a rail? Get up and, pull back over? Dumbass. Sadass that fell over. And he's pullin himself back up.

And like *I* did. Go over and wait a minute, for your brain. And *then* up. That's all you are then. Some guy who just is, not lucky, hundred different ways. He fell and hurt himself, did it to himself. And waited.

Then, *after* he waited. Right? Draggin himself up.

That's all I could think about. You think about it, what you can do, but what. Oh hi Kim, whoever, I'm back.

Oh and so, she's thinkin about me too. And that's what I'm doin, layin there knowin, everybody's thinkin about me.

And, that's all it was. That's all why, that you guys came.

But no, *you* lay down there though. In front of God and everybody.

So, I had time though, down in the grass. Because, there I am. Waitin.

And you can see the actual, the little blades, in the grass. The separate ones. In a stadium though. This giant *place*, and you're in this one little spot. And the game's goin, while I'm there, and I got my face in it, feelin it, while they're playin.

And, I can see the stuff you don't think about, some place like that. Like the grass. Every part of this giant, this *place*, people can see me. And all these players, and famous ones. And the whole time, I can see the grass, and feel it, the actual parts of it, on this field.

All these other people though. Wantin to know, all the same thing. What *they* want to know.

That means I've, you're privileged. Because, I told you, the real part. Of the story.

Because, reporters, comin in. Just askin, and askin, what, what, what happened. And like the lawyers. And at work. I'm tellin everybody, and their eyes, they're, *oooooh* Ollie.

That's what I'm, I can't explain. What I told you. Because. I'm tellin my story, and then, where do I fit that in, about the grass?