

Civil Rights

Chuck sat in the dark next to the window. A knife lay on the ironing board across the small motel room. He lived there, lived there for the last few months. And before that there had been another motel room. That one stank just as bad as this one. Mold grew on the walls and ceiling between the yellow streaks of nicotine.

Jane was not there tonight. She wasn't many nights. She would come home later. Drunk. And she would stink of her own cunt. She would stumble and scream and fall and shit and vomit and tell of the man who bought her a bottle of wine, or if she was lucky, whiskey, and fucked her. But she always came home when the booze ran out. And Chuck always waited.

He stared out that window, between the bars that kept him from the world and the world from him, at the city he barely knew. He wasn't even sure what city it was anymore. He wasn't sure where he had been last year, or even how he got to this fucking city with its lights at night that didn't even do the job of exposing the roaches that crawled up the walls and tickled his feet until he moved and stomped.

Tonight was no different than the rest. Chuck sat and drank from

the gallon of cheap red wine and wore only his underwear. And they were no longer white but rotted with holes, a yellow-green with red stains from the boils and sores and falls.

And Chuck sat and he drank from the jug of wine and he swore to himself and cursed his woman, now underneath a man in a similar room with an all too familiar stench wafting from inside of her. He rolled his cigarettes with one hand and he coughed and hacked and coughed and sometimes threw up, but continued to smoke and drink and wait. Wine had spilled on his gut and his hands, sticky, sweet, and disgusting. His feet were bare and his toenails were long, yellow and brittle. He scratched at his beard and the sores on his arms.

At nearly 5 a.m., as the paperboys and delivery trucks began to make their rounds, Jane came home. She flicked the light switch next to the door and exposed her disgusting husband in waiting. He greeted her with a slurred, "Fuck you."

"NO. Fuck you, you fat shit!" She slurred back.

"What did he do for you tonight? You get some whiskey, some wine? Some of that damn CRACK?"

"Yeah all of that shit I got. And a better fuckin' than I ever got from you."

"Fuck you, Jane, you stupid whore."

"Look at you in your fucking shitty underwear and drunk and ugly and fat. Why do I stay with you?"

"You don't stay with me. You go get fucked every night by some guy who's got a bit of money he won at the track and some booze. Why do I stay with you?"

"You shouldn't."

It was time for Chuck to put an end to it all. She plagued him. It was just too much. He'd hung on to the damn bitch no matter what she

did. She was a part of him; a part that had to be removed. The light shone on the knife across the room on the ironing board that functioned as a dinner table, when they ate, if they ate at all.

The knife lay there, illuminated by the one light in the room that was only a light bulb suspended from the ceiling, shining down on the blade and the filth around it.

Chuck walked to the makeshift table, muttering incomprehensible statements with an occasionally audible, “Bitch,” or “fucking whore,” mixed in. He grabbed the knife and returned to his seat by the window. He stared at Jane across the room; she went silent in shock. Jane shivered as Chuck felt the blade’s sharpness on his fingertips and continued to stare at her with a grin frozen onto his face. He needed freedom. Freedom from that shitty motel room, freedom from that whore.

And freedom he found as he stood up and tore the rotten, dirty underwear from his loins. With no thought or hesitation, he held the blade to his scrotum, and sliced away his balls. They fell bloody to the floor and he finished the last of the wine as Jane screamed. He grabbed a towel and walked out the door.

Free at last.