

"Even Steven"

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INT. CAR, FRONT SEATS - DAY

The stereo system plays an old soul song. The artist belting out the lyrics.

WILLIE (32) a stocky male in a fashionable coat and winter cap. A black cigarette hangs from his lips. He sits behind the wheel.

MATTHEW (28) a scrawny looking nerd in a heavy jacket. He sits in the passengers seat.

WILLIE

Now...you know how I feel about not getting paid.

Willie drags on the ciggy.

WILLIE

What do you suggest we do about this matter?

Matthew clears his throat.

MATTHEW

Well...um...since it would take forever to pay you back on a math teachers salary. We can-

WILLIE

Time out. A math teacher's salary? Your kidding?

MATTHEW

No, I'm a third grade math teacher. I teach over at Rikhus Elementary.

Willie looks out the window. He rubs his chin.

A moment passes.

WILLIE

I'll work with you. Your not my worst client.

MATTHEW

Okay, shoot.

WILLIE

There's this guy named Klondike. He-

MATTHEW
 Klondike? Like those ice cream
 squares?

Willie stares at Matt for a second.

WILLIE
 He's in the same business as
 myself. He is also my main
 competition.

Matt fidgets around nervously.

WILLIE
 You slay that scatterbrained fuck,
 and I'll call it even.

Matt doesn't even think.

MATTHEW
 No. Got any other ideas?

WILLIE
 No? What do you mean 'no'?

MATTHEW
 No! I'm not going to kill anybody.
 I wouldn't even know how to.

WILLIE
 Well you better find out how, and
 soon.

MATTHEW
 Can't I do something else? Do you
 not have any other ideas?

Willie stares at the bookworm.

WILLIE
 Okay, how about this one? I deep
 six you instead.

Willie pulls open his coat. The handle of a gun peeks out of
 his breast pocket.

Matt stares at the sight, frozen.

WILLIE
 See that? That's Roscoe Ratchet. He
 doesn't like to leave the comfort
 of my pocket unless it's time to do
 some work. Or...it's time to remind

WILLIE
 little egg-head mother fuckers what
 time it is?

The two stare at each other.

Matt moves his gaze to the gun. He takes a deep breath, and exhales.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

The place is cramped.

Matthew paces back and forth in front of the mirror.

Matthew's wears a mask of worry.

MATTHEW
 (to himself)
 I can't do this-there's has to be
 another way. I can't kill anybody.

Matthew pauses. He looks himself in the mirror.

BEEP-BEEP!

Matthew digs out his cellular device.

The text message reads: "*Corner of 38th and De Rail. You or him?*"

Matthew gawks back at the mirror.

INT. KLONDIKE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ONE HOUR AND THIRTY-ONE MINUTES LATER

Clothes and filthy dishes lie on the floor and coffee table. Psychedelic Rock music rushes from the sound system.

Matthew, beer in hand, sits in a chair facing the couch.

MATTHEW
 How much can you give me?

SNORT!

A straw vacuums up white powder.

KLONDIKE (32) sits hunched over the coffee table. He sports a robe and briefs.

He sits up abruptly. Sweat slips down his face.

KLONDIKE
Holy buckets! Fuck yeah!

He pinches his nose shut briefly. Matthew watches on uncomfortably.

MATTHEW
Um...

KLONDIKE
You like Hendrix?

MATTHEW
He's alright, I guess.

Klondike shoots him a look.

KLONDIKE
Alright?! That guy was a fucking
animal on the axe. His U.S. debut,
at the Monterrey-

Klondike raises his open palms pointed skyward. All his
finger wiggle.

KLONDIKE
-where he set his guitar ablaze?
Man, a thing of absolute beauty.

Matthew nods.

Klondike digs out a pack of smokes from his robe. He lights
it.

KLONDIKE
So, how much?

MATTHEW
One thousand.

Klondike grinds his teeth, and slowly nods.

KLONDIKE
I can do a thousand.

He flicks his ash in a coffee mug on the table.

KLONDIKE
What about the interest?

MATTHEW

How much?

KLONDIKE

You get one thousand now. I get fourteen hundred next week.

MATTHEW

Okay.

A shady smile grows on Klondikes face.

MATTHEW

What?

KLONDIKE

Never had a customer who didn't try and talk me down.

MATTHEW

Well, now you do.

Klondike studies Matthew.

KLONDIKE

You, know? As long as I've been doing this, I've learned one thing.

Matt stares.

KLONDIKE

No one excepts the first offer.

MATTHEW

I don't see where your going with this.

KLONDIKE

Well, I get the feeling your here with something else in mind.

A long pause ensues. The two men stare at each other.

Matthew becomes uneasy. Klondike looks at Matthew nerveless, cool as ice.

Matthew blinks.

MATTHEW

Are we in business, or not?

Klondike sizes him up. He Bogart's the cigarette, then stands.

KLONDIKE

Yeah, we're in business. Sit tight,
I'll be back in a flash.

MATTHEW

Sure.

Klondike disappears into his back room.

Matthew springs out of his chair. He scans the room.

MATTHEW

(to himself)

There's got to be something around
here.

Matthew takes in his surroundings. He finds a DUMB BELL by
the couch. He takes a couple of practice swings.

SNORT!

KLONDIKE(O.S.)

Whoo!

Matthew hops behind a wall, just outside the back room. He
lies in wait.

Klondike wanders toward the living room, carrying a small
shoe box.

Klondike eyes the living room for Matt. He shrugs, then
drops to the couch.

Klondike places the shoe box on the table, and opens it. He
pulls out a WALTHER P99, cocks it.

KLONDIKE

(to himself)

Righteous.

Matthew sees this, and freezes.

Klondike puts the weapon back in the box, he scans the room.

KLONDIKE

Matt?! You in the bathroom? We in
business or what?

Klondike picks up his straw from the table.

SNORT!

He does another line of coke.

Klondike rocks back and forth on the sofa. Stomping his feet, nodding his head. High as a satellite.

Matthew looks on paralyzed.

MATTHEW
Shit, shit, shit, shit!

Klondike gets up and begins to walk toward where Matthew is hiding.

Matthew puts his weapon at the ready.

Klondike continues to walk, then freezes.

Matthew watches on confused, as Klondike clutches his chest.

MATTHEW
No way...

Klondike's face contorts, he then grunts in pain, before falling face first to the floor.

Matthew comes out of hiding. He puts his index and middle finger on the coke heads throat.

MATTHEW
Oh my God!

INT. CAR, FRONT SEATS - NIGHT

Matt and Willie converse on a quiet side street.

Willie listens intently.

MATTHEW
That's what happened. He just collapsed.

Willie smiles.

WILLIE
As long as that dude is gone. He was really starting to chafe my ass.

Matthew shakes his head.

MATTHEW
Well he's gone. I didn't kill him, but he's gone. Are we even?

Willie looks outside in deep thought. He begins to slowly nod.

WILLIE
Yeah, we're even.

Willie extends his open palm. Matthew takes it.

Willie pulls him in close.

WILLIE
If you ever need some cash. You know who to call. But, understand me. What happened? That's the game. See, I have a bad sense of humor. So, when people wanna get funny with my money? Things get grim quick, fast, and in a hurry.

Matthew stares, uneasy.

WILLIE
You got lucky.

Willie lets go of Matthew's hand. Matt recoils a bit.

MATTHEW
So, are we even?

Willie smiles.

WILLIE
Even Steven.

Matthew stares, before climbing out the car.

END