

Sugarcane

written by

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INT. SELF-STORAGE UNIT - NIGHT

The door to a storage unit rolls open. ROOSEVELT, 70's, African American, and JEFF, 30's, stand on the other side.

Roosevelt reaches in and flips on a light switch.

The storage unit illuminates.

JEFF

Jesus... is all this stuff stolen?

The 10x20 unit is packed with valuables.

ROOSEVELT

Hard to say for sure. Police still lookin' into it.

JEFF

They catch the guy, yet?

ROOSEVELT

Guy and gal, actually. And as far I know, they're still on the loose.

JEFF

Hmm...

(beat)

Well... should we...

ROOSEVELT

Of course. Let's get to it.

They step inside.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

(looks at his notepad)

Sorry, my memory's gone to shit, It's Jeff... Jeff Bills, right?

JEFF

That's right.

ROOSEVELT

Just the safe and the tools, then?

JEFF

Yep.

Roosevelt starts to rummage around.

Jeff watches intently.

Finally-

ROOSEVELT
This the one, right?

Roosevelt steps aside, revealing a small safe in the corner.

JEFF
(sigh of relief)
Thank god. Yeah. That's it.

Roosevelt jots on his notepad.

ROOSEVELT
You might wanna thank the
manufacturer, too, while you're at
it. Never woulda found you without
that serial number.

JEFF
Very true... very true.

ROOSEVELT
Now... let's find those tools of
yours so we can get you on your
way.

Roosevelt starts to look around.

JEFF
You know what... why don't you just
keep the tools. It's the least I
can do. Honestly.

ROOSEVELT
Well, that's very generous of you,
but I've got enough tools to fill
every damn unit in this place.

Roosevelt continues to search.

JEFF
(looks at watch)
Oh, wow. I didn't realize how late
it was. I've actually got a meeting
I can't be late to. Do you mind if
I just grab the safe and come back
later for those tools?

ROOSEVELT
You got a meeting at this hour?

JEFF
Yeah, I know, right?

ROOSEVELT
 Busy man, huh?

JEFF
 Too busy.

ROOSEVELT
 You got a wife and kids back at the nest?

JEFF
 I do. Yeah.

ROOSEVELT
 And how old are the little ones?

JEFF
 Five and two.

ROOSEVELT
 Ah. Fun ages. Boys? Girls?

JEFF
 One of each.

ROOSEVELT
 Lucky man. I've got three, myself. All boys. Good boys. But I gotta admit, deep down, I always wanted a little girl. There's just somethin' about 'em. They're sweet, you know? Like sugar. Little boys can be sweet too, but they're more like... they're more like *Splenda-sweet*.
 (chuckles)
 You know what I'm talkin' about, don't ya?

JEFF
 Yeah... sure...
 (beat)
 Well, hey, thanks again for everything. I don't wanna be rude, but I really need to get to that meeting, so I'm just gonna-

He steps toward the safe. Roosevelt puts his hand out, stopping him.

ROOSEVELT
 Just... hold your horses. We're gettin' there.

Awkward beat.

JEFF

Okay...

Roosevelt pulls out a pack of cigarettes and offers one to Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)

No thanks.

Roosevelt lights a cig and takes a long drag.

ROOSEVELT

You know, Jeff, I've been around a while. A long, long while. And I've done things. Good things. Bad things. I'd like to think the scale is tipped toward the good, but who knows... Thing is, when you do bad things, you see bad things. Over the years, I've been able to unsee many of those bad things. Only way I can sleep at night. But lately, Jeff, lately I can't sleep a damn wink, and I feel like my eyes are just gonna POP out of their sockets at any moment...

(beat)

...and I'm worried, Jeff, I'm worried that I may never sleep again -- because no matter how hard I try, no matter how hard I pray, I can't unsee what I found... on this...

He pulls out a flash-drive from his pocket.

Jeff's face falls.

Roosevelt turns the safe with his foot. The back looks like it's had a crowbar and a blowtorch taken to it.

JEFF

(re: flash-drive)

I... I don't know what that is.

ROOSEVELT

You sure?

JEFF

Yeah, I-

ROOSEVELT
I ain't got time for bullshit,
Jeffry. And apparently neither do
you, with that important meeting,
and all...

Roosevelt BANGS twice on the wall.

TIM, 20's, and SARAH, 20's, walk in -- each holding a gun.

JEFF
(to Roosevelt)
Uh... what's going on, here?
(beat)
Look, I told you, man, I don't know
what the hell that is.

ROOSEVELT
Then what was it doin' in your
safe?

JEFF
I... I don't know. Someone must
have put it there.

ROOSEVELT
What about the soiled diaper? Just
what the *fuck* was that doin' in
there?

Jeff's face goes red.

JEFF
I don't know. I swear to god.

Roosevelt takes a another drag of his cigarette.

ROOSEVELT
Well... I guess we should probably
summon the police, then. I'm sure
they'll wanna spend some quality
time with your computer... your
phone too, I'd imagine.

Roosevelt pulls out his phone to make the call.

JEFF
Wait. Just... look, I've got a
thousand dollars in my car. It's
yours. Okay? I can get it right
now.

ROOSEVELT
Whatchu doin' with that much cash
on you?

JEFF
I... just cashed a check.

Roosevelt grins. Not buying it.

ROOSEVELT
So... you're sayin' you ain't ever
seen what's on this, then?

Holds up the flash-drive.

JEFF
No. I swear to god.

ROOSEVELT
And you're sayin' you don't like
little girls the way the man in the
video likes little girls?

JEFF
No. Hell no. Fuck that. I'm not
that kind of person.

ROOSEVELT
What kind of person would that be?

JEFF
You know... a... a pedophile.

Beat.

Roosevelt takes another puff of his cigarette, then drops it
and puts it out with his foot.

ROOSEVELT
Well, since you requested to keep
the authorities outta this, I guess
we'll just have to fashion our own
little polygraph test. Why don't
you go ahead and pull down your
pants.

JEFF
What?

Tim and Sarah point their guns at Jeff.

ROOSEVELT
Your undergarments, too.

JEFF
What the hell are you talking
about?

ROOSEVELT
Sarah, shoot him in the knee-cap,
please.

Sarah points her gun at his knee.

JEFF
Wait! Just... hold on.
(beat)
Two thousand dollars... each of
you. I can get it in ten minutes.

ROOSEVELT
(to Sarah)
Do it.

She cocks her gun.

JEFF
WAIT! Okay! Fuck!

He pulls down his pants and underwear.

ROOSEVELT
Tim, get him a seat.

Tim pulls up a stool.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
Sit.

Reluctantly, Jeff sits. Breathing heavily.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
(to Tim)
His hands and feet.

Tim zip-ties Jeff's wrists behind his back, then secures his ankles to the stool.

JEFF
(resisting)
What the fuck are you doing?!

ROOSEVELT
Sarah, would you mind gettin' us
all set up.

Sarah grabs a laptop from a shelf and situates it in front of Jeff.

Roosevelt hands her the flash-drive. She inserts it, and navigates to a video file.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Here's what's gonna happen, Jeffry. You're gonna keep your eyes on the screen, and we're gonna keep our eyes on you. You say you ain't into this, you know, pedophile thing, but we wanna hear it from your little boy down there...

(gestures toward Jeff's
penis)

cuz we all know little boys can't lie for shit.

JEFF

This is fucking crazy! Please-

ROOSEVELT

If, at any point during the video your little boy starts squirming, and *especially* if he stands straight up... well, Tim's gonna cut his little head off.

Tim unclips an angle-grinder from his belt.

The gravity of the situation sets in...

JEFF

LET ME FUCKING GO!

ROOSEVELT

Calm down, Jeffry.

JEFF

YOU'RE MAKING A BIG FUCKING MISTAKE! I KNOW PEOPLE!

ROOSEVELT

(grins)

I've probably known 'em longer.

JEFF

FUCK YOU! YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

ROOSEVELT

What should I do then, Jeff?

This catches Jeff off-guard.

JEFF

Just... let me go, and I'll get you the money, and you'll never see me again. I promise.

ROOSEVELT

Can't do that, I'm afraid.

Resignation slowly creeps in for Jeff.

JEFF

Then call the fuckin' cops...

Roosevelt grins.

ROOSEVELT

Can't do that, either...

(eyes the valuables in the unit)

No offense, but... you ain't worth the risk...

Jeff looks confused for a beat, then it dawns on him...

JEFF

It was you...

Roosevelt grins.

JEFF (CONT'D)

You stole my safe.

(looks around)

All this stuff, it's...

ROOSEVELT

We call it inventory.

A beat.

JEFF

You're a fucking hypocrite.

Roosevelt takes another drag of his cigarette.

ROOSEVELT

We all draw our lines, Jeffrey...

He turns to Sarah

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Let's get started.

JEFF

Wait-

Sarah forcefully stuffs a gag in Jeff's mouth.

Roosevelt, Tim, and Sarah put ear plugs in.

FROM THIS POINT ON, ALL SOUND IS SLIGHTLY MUTED

Sarah walks over to the computer and hits play.

Angle Grinder in hand, Tim kneels next to Jeff and watches his crotch for signs of movement.

Sarah stands behind Jeff and holds his head straight, forcing him to watch the video.

He thrashes around and shuts his eyes tightly. Sarah hits him hard on the side of his head with her gun.

ROOSEVELT

Eyes on the screen, Jeffry.

Jeff continues to struggle. Sarah forcefully grabs him by the hair and holds his head straight.

Jeff knows it's a losing battle. He reluctantly begins to watch.

We start to hear the DRUM of his HEARTBEAT.

Several tense beats pass, the color draining from his saturated face.

His BREATHING QUICKENS, as does his HEARTBEAT which gradually grows louder.

Roosevelt watches Jeff closely, another cigarette dangling from his lips.

Jeff scrunches up his face as he watches. This is torture for him.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Concentrate, Jeffry.

His HEARTBEAT THUMPS LOUDER and FASTER.

He starts to WIMPER.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Concentrate...

Jeff squirms. His HEARTBEAT BEATING out of his chest...

Finally:

Something happens downtown. Activity.

The sound of Jeff's HEARTBEAT abruptly stops.

He looks down at his crotch and holds his breath. Eyes wide.

Tim looks up at Roosevelt, waiting for the signal.

Roosevelt stares at Jeff's crotch, head tilted.

JEFF
(crying)
Please...

Roosevelt looks at Tim and nods.

Tim pulls the trigger. The angle-grinder's blade REVS.

THE END