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SMOKING CAN KILL

by

Gerlinde Kenkel & Bobby P.

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kenkel20002000@freenet.de

FADE IN:

1 INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

1

A dirty living room that has not been cleaned for a long time. Empty beer and liquor bottles are lying on the floor, the table, and the broken sofa. Likewise, old pizza boxes and glasses, on which cobwebs have formed.

This is the space of someone who has given up on life.

We HEAR LOUD STEPS.

BEN (40), thin and unkempt, with messy hair that has not seen shampoo for a long time, wearing a dirty T-shirt and tattered jeans, walks into the room.

He removes the bottles from the sofa and sits down. He looks around, does not find what he is looking for.

Ben gets up, goes to a small chest of drawers, searches through them.

He finds three packets of cigarettes, all empty. Ben reaches into his pants pocket and takes out a wallet.

He looks into it. Everything is empty except a few coins that he counts and three \$5 bills.

BEN
(Smiles)
Enough for a pack of cigarettes.

The door bell RINGS. He puts the wallet in, and leave the room.

2 INT. BEFORE BEN'S DOOR/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

2

A clean hallway, the exact opposite of Ben's living room. At the door is HEIDI (55), a grumpy-looking woman with tufted blond hair and too much make-up.

Ben opens the door, sees Heidi, wants to close the door again. Heidi puts her foot between.

HEIDI
(strong German accent,
command tone)
Mister Miller, your rent has
been overdue for three weeks. I
want to see the money in my
account by Friday,
or you're sleeping in the
streets.

(MORE)

HEIDI (CONT'D)
 (smells in Ben's
 apartment)
 That stinks to heaven!

BEN
 (Annoyed))
 I'll have your money by Friday.

HEIDI
 I hope so!

She pulls her foot back, Ben closes the door.

BEN (O.S.)
 Old hag!

HEIDI
 I heard that!

3 EXT. IN FRONT OF A PUB - LATER

3

A pub run down from the outside, which looks like its best years are long gone.

On the landing two old drunken men are sitting, their bottles of liquor hidden in plastic bags in their hands.

With empty eyes, they watch the few people passing the pub.

The door of the pub is opened. Vladimir (30), a muscular man with short-cropped red hair, runs down the stairs, brutally pushing aside one of the older men.

The INNKEEPER (40), also a muscular man, gets loud

INNKEEPER
 Come back when you get paid!
 It's over three hundred dollars
 you owe me.

Contemptuously, Vladimir spits on the floor.

VLADIMIR
 I'm not paying a penny! Your
 beer tastes like piss!

He goes. The Innkeeper looks at him angrily.

4 INT. HALLWAY/STAIRS - SHORTLY LATER

4

Ben closes the apartment door, puts the key in his left pocket.

His stomach growls with hunger. He ignores it, gets a bit dizzy, holds on to the banister. Slowly he goes down.

5 EXT. PARK - LATER

5

Vladimir is sitting on a park bench. He counts the money in his purse. Only a few coins and two dollars can be seen.

Angry, he puts the purse in his jacket pocket.

VLADIMIR
(loud, angry)
Maybe have him
say, I'm broke. Why am I always
broke?

He looks around. The park is empty.

6 EXT. STREET / IN FRONT OF PARK ENTRANCE - SHORTLY LATER

6

Ben gasps as he walks with fast steps down the deserted street. His heart is pounding.

He passes the park entrance. He does not notice Vladimir who is looking at him and smiles. Vladimir gets up, walks slowly to the park entrance.

VLADIMIR
(Grins)
The purse is refilled, baby.

7 EXT. IN FRONT OF TOBACCO SHOP - LATER

7

Vladimir stands behind a big van, observes Ben, who buys a box of cigarettes in a tobacco shop.

Ben opens the pack of cigarettes, takes out a cigarette, puts it in his mouth, and lights it with a lighter. Then he leaves the shop.

Vladimir follows him at his side of the street.

8 EXT. DARK SIDE STREET - MIDNIGHT

8

A deserted side street. Ben goes smoking along the street.

Vladimir is ten steps behind him. Ben does not notice him

VLADIMIR
Hey, Buddy! Can I bum a fag off
you? Spare change?

Ben turns around. He sees Vladimir, only a few steps away, with a knife in his hand, which he threatens Ben. Ben stays calm.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
Gimme your wallet, right now.
And your cigare?es, fagot.

Smiling, Ben reaches into his pocket. The smile confuses Vladimir. He takes his hand out, nothing is in it.

BEN
(very angry)
Nobody robs me! Nobody threatens
me!

His left foot leaps forward, hitting Vladimir's wrist while the knife is in place. The knife flies to the ground.

Ben's fists hammer on Vladimir's larynx and he crumples to the ground.

Ben kneels in front of Vladimir. He opens his left sleeve, a tattoo of an armed eagle becomes visible.

BEN
Do you know what that is,
schmock? I was a member of the
Marines. Head of a special unit
for black operations.
(Grin)
And we have never taken
prisoners!

He takes Vladimir's knife and stings. Blood flows on Vladimir's shirt.

Ben quietly lights a cigarette.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP:

On the cigarette box you can see a warning:

Smoking can kill you.

FADE OUT:

THE END