

Wasted Mind

“Alright you little jerkoffs, I want you to sit down and shut your faces because I got something important to tell you.” This was the voice of my boss, the Police Commissioner. It was the first of the month and as usual we all were about to get our new monthly assignments. We all flocked to the meeting room eagerly awaiting the endearing greetings from the Commissioner. Some say that this guy was an asshole, but he knew how to get the job done. He was one of the smartest guys I had ever known. He only hired the best and he knew how to keep the city safe.

“As I’m sure you people are aware, because of the fuck-heads at Government Hill, the state is strapped for cash.” The Commissioner looked pleasantly pissed this morning. “So what they’re doing is asking the cities and towns to step up and take control of guarding state facilities. That brings me to your new monthly assignments. Now, I told those people what they were asking for would stretch us dangerously thin, but damn-it we don’t have a choice. I’m going to be asking a lot more of you people this month. Don’t disappoint me.”

I learned that I would be working eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. My assignment was to patrol city sections 153,154, and 155. These were the southernmost parts of the city. These were also the lousiest parts too, filled with drug dealers, gangs and prostitutes. The Commissioner even personally warned me that the gangs and prostitutes were getting together to form gangs of prostitute who would become pimp dealers! The Commissioner said that these guys were bad news and ordered us to strictly enforced a no “mercy policy” against them. I wasn’t going to let him down. There were also a fair amount of businesses too in the southern sections too, like book shops and convenient stores. There was also a new church under

construction. Most importantly though, was a government warehouse. These warehouses were all over the city. We didn't get told what was in them. We were just told to guard them, and if I saw any people who didn't belong there, shoot them. Sometimes I'm at a loss for words for our Commissioner. He was truly a brilliant man.

The first week of our new assignments weren't too bad. Sure, there was the usual amount of petty crimes, but that wasn't anything we couldn't take care of. And as for the warehouses, they took care of themselves. All the warehouses were fenced off anyways, and the monstrous buildings could confuse the crap out of anybody. Where the hell were the doors on these things? How could anyone get in?

In fact, the only thing interesting that happened during the first week was meeting Reverend White. He was the minister at the new church that was being built. I'll never forget the first conversation we had. On the first day of my new assignment he spoke to me, "Greetings my son." He must have been confused. I wasn't his son, but I assumed that since he was new in town he must have been a little confused. "Well hey there Reverend," I answered, "you must be new in town. I'm Officer Kerwin. My father died a few years ago in a car accident." He looked at me with warm concerning eyes and told me, "I'm sorry to hear that my son. I understand the hurt a loss like that may cause. You are always welcome to come to my church to allow God to heal your wounds." He seemed like such a charming and inviting fellow. Listening to him was very comforting. "Why thank you Reverend, that sure is kind of you. When will your church be ready to open?" I asked. "I will be able to share God's graces in the church in about two weeks. But I understand you're hurt, and my son, I would like to welcome you to the church community right now. For you see, God helps those who help themselves and rewards a community for their humanity and charity. Please, may I ask for a donation so that God's love may sooner be upon

you and all his children?” What a sweet man, I thought to myself. I handed him a donation and with heartfelt pride told him, “Thank you Reverend. You know we are a lot alike. I also became a police officer so that I could help people.” I felt like I could really open up to this man. I continued “But I don’t know if I’m doing that right now. See, the Commissioner has me spending time patrolling the big government warehouse just South of here, but there’s no people around. I don’t even know how people could get in even if they wanted to with all the fencing and no doors on the building...” “My son,” he comforted, “it is truly a blessing to help those in need, and God rewards the hearts of those who help their fellow man.” I thanked him for those wise words. I would definitely have something to think about later. We continued talking until he spoke his final endearing words of the conversation: “I am looking forward to seeing you in my church. Be well my son and may blessings be upon you.” I gave him another donation and was on my way.

While I was on patrol one night, I met another character. There was a man in about his mid-forties crying on the sidewalk. A chance to make a difference, I thought to myself. Turns out this man was the owner of the book store that just went out of business, Bill’s Book Adventure Store it was called. When I approached the sobbing bookstore owner I asked what the matter was, but I couldn’t understand what he was saying. His speech was full of sadness and gibberish. What could I say to this man to cheer him up? I thought hard. I know! I’ll say what the Commissioner would say! That would sure stop me from crying if I were in his shoes! So I told him, “Hey, be a man. We can’t have you doing this in the streets.” He continued to cry, “Nobody likes books and nobody likes me!” was his teary eyed response.

Think Kerwin, think! What’s the best thing I can do in this situation? Reverend White said the best thing for me to do is to help my fellow man. A fellow means... someone like me...

hmm... I can't imagine anyone closer to me than the Commissioner. We're both men, and we're both officers. So all I have to do be like the Commissioner, and then I'll be helping this man. I'll do what my boss says. How could I have ever doubted a man as great as the Commissioner? The protocol was to plant drugs on people who needed to be brought to the station. And that's what I did. The Commissioner would take good care of Bill. I was sure of it.

The next week, on a beautiful summer's day, I happened to pass by Reverend White. I was hoping to talk to him, but I just wasn't expecting to see him outside of the government warehouse. "This is a pleasant surprise Reverend. What brings you to this part of the city?" He answered me as cheerfully as any man could: "Oh my son, God has given us such a beautiful day. I am simply enjoying his gift to us." A gift, I thought, of course. I gave the Reverend another donation.

"Does something trouble you my son?" he asked. I told him about Bill. I thought the Commissioner would help him, but Bill seemed sadder than ever afterwards. He even came out of the police station with cuts and bruises. I told the Reverend that I didn't understand. I thought I had done everything right, but nothing ended well. I didn't know what to do. His answer lifted my burden: "He is in need of God's healing, my son. Tell me where he lives, so that I may Shepard him to the flock, and comfort him by the blessings of charity." I was left speechless. I gave the Reverend another donation and told him Bill's address.

The Reverend smiled. After an harmonious pause he asked, "Could you tell me what that building is over there, my son?" It took me a minute to find myself again amongst the tranquility I felt blessed to feel. Snapping out of it I answered, "Oh that! That's Damien's Porn Shack! I hear they have some great videos and magazines, at least that's what the Commissioner tells me." The Reverend looked disappointed and angry. "I have some work to do in this city," was his only

response before he hastily pivoted away. He seemed quite agile. I wondered why he had left so suddenly, and hoped I hadn't upset him.

That morning I thought I was at an all time high. Reverend White's words had truly inspired me. For a brief moment, I had felt a peace that I could have never dreamed of. But I felt uneasy when it ended. The following night brought me an all time low. It was Bill. I was at the station when the call came in. Bill was in the middle of an intersection with a gun to his head. When the Commissioner got word he ordered all of us to the area: "Listen up dick-heads, I'm not jerkin around here. When people come into my station. We handle them. We have to make an example of this guy. I will not stand for anybody leaving this facility thinking that it's to go out there and do this kinda of CRAP! I want everyone to the scene, NOW!" The Commissioner was truly a man of brave action. I was certain he would be able to help Bill now, especially with all of us as back up. Hang on Bill, we're coming for you!

I couldn't believe my ears when I got there. Bill was just going on and on and on about how stupid and greedy people were. People like the Commissioner and the Reverend. He said that we better start appreciating his books or we'll be sorry. It was then that I remembered what the Reverend had said: the blessings of charity. I knew that the Commissioner was as smart as they come, but maybe, I thought, if I gave him the advice from the Reverend, he would be sure to come up with an ingenious plan. Twice as ingenious as normal, because it's from two great men! I went up to the Commissioner and told him, "I have an idea. I think he needs some charity." The Commissioner looked at me and scolded. "Charity!" he exclaimed, "Kerwin, you're a friggin' idiot!" That's when the Commissioner shot Bill. My jaw dropped. Blood was shooting all over the place. Then the Commissioner told me, "Kerwin, you're a stupid moron. You'll forget all about this in the morning." I wondered how he could say that. Nothing like this had ever

happened in the city before. How could I forget it?

That night I dreamed about Bill, the Reverend, and the Commissioner. Tortured by my nightmare, I saw Bill's blood spilling into the streets and onto my hands. The Commissioner was laughing like an ogre. If only I had shown them the blessings of charity, I thought. My world was crashing before me. I wondered if this was my fault. I was afraid. I wanted to go seek comfort from the Reverend and his church. I wanted the blessings of charity. I wanted to give him donations, as many donations as it took.

I wasn't the only one who felt that way. The very next morning, it looked like the entire city was trying to get inside the church. There was so much fear in the crowd. I overheard my fellow officers in the mob: "With all of us around Bill the book nut, there weren't any officers left to patrol the warehouse. Someone broke in, and stole something called the 'universal broadcast helmet'. We don't know what it does, but the government isn't happy and the Commissioner is so pissed, I think he might kill someone else, one of us!." This was awful. "Reverend!" I cried, "I need you!" I was just one man though, in a sea of pleading voices.

When the Reverend finally came to the door, I was so overjoyed that I nearly fainted. He was dressed in fitting priestly robes. He even wore what looked like a large ceremonious hat. The visual soothed me. "Please come my children," he said calmly, "the blessings of charity shall comfort you." His soothing voice had quelled our fears. As we all made our way into the church, I felt his sermon was to be a true blessing:

*Fear not my children. Though the worry in your souls my plague you, do not allow fear to blighten your hearts. Following the path of fear will only hasten the spirit's anxiety. Do not allow the fear and hate to clout your minds, my children. For you see, fear has begotten fear, and hate will beget hate. Follow*

*the path of the righteous and stay true to the words of the spirit. A mind clouded by sin cannot righteously judge its own actions, but a blessed mind may keep to the path and judge for the betterment of brethren. Listen to me my children. I will guide you on this path. Through blessings our spirits may never stray. I will guide you and show you the judgement that sin trembles before. Sin, my children, is the refusal of blessings and the refusal of God. My children, Bill was a none believer. Though I had offered him the blessings of charity, he refused. His spirit laid besmirched on the path of evil. My children, the Commissioner is a none believer. He is a man willing to endanger righteous lives. He is a man willing to find false love in a shack and betray the true love given to us by our Creator. Heed my words, my children. Though it may seem that sin and evil grow amongst you, fear not. I will tell you how to follow the true path. We must cleanse the city of sin, my children. Cleansed of the Commissioner! Cleansed of the government that allows sin! Cleansed of all establishments that allow for impurity! Now go forth my children, and may blessings of charity be upon you.*

The blessings of charity were truly upon us that morning. We gave the Reverend all that we had with us, until there was nothing left to give.

Many of us marched to the Police Station, where the Commissioner was sure to be. We wanted to rid the city of him and his sin. We believed that all of our suffering was his fault, that his sin had caused us to drift towards the path of fear instead of the path of blessings. When we arrived at the Police Station, the Commissioner was there to greet us. He was wearing a helmet. He told us that it was his riot helmet, but I didn't recall him ever wearing it before. He spoke to us:

*You people are all a bunch of bitches. The nerve of you people trying to attack me? What are you thinking? It wasn't me who killed Bill, you stupid morons. It was that fat bitch Reverend White who did it! And he stole the thing from the government too, the greedy fuck-head. He's taking your money and you people are so stupid, you can't figure anything out. So beat it, get lost, you didn't see none of this. No, you know what? I'm going to come with you, and I'm gonna kill that fat bitch and then all of you morons are going to forget about all of this.*

It was at that moment that I once again became filled with pride for the dear Commissioner. He was a true genius of a man.

All around us, buildings were burning. The Commissioner seemed particularly upset when he saw Damien's Porn Shack in ruins. I wasn't scared though. I knew what I was doing was the right thing. The Commissioner even told me so. After seeing Reverend White shoot Bill last night, I knew that the Commissioner wouldn't put up with any more bologna. I was right by his side, ready to bring justice to Bill's slaughter. I wondered how I could have been so foolish as to trust the Reverend. The Commissioner was right, I thought, I was a moron. We marched to the church. The Commissioner stood with us. He was somewhere in the crowd, but none of us were quite sure where.

"My children," said the Reverend. He was still dressed in his ceremonial robes. His calm eyes quelled us:

*It hurts me to think that you would turn on your own dear minister, he who brings you out of the darkness and bestows blessings upon you. Where is the Shepard of the devil, I ask you? He is not among you, for he has abandoned his*

*flock and attempts to soil the blessings of charity. Remember the fear and the pain the Commissioner has caused you. Let us not stray from the path my children. Follow your dear Reverend. I will show you how to cleans the city and your soul. Blessings of charity, my children, blessings of charity. Onward!*

Reverend White was right, he always was right. He will lead us to the blessings that the cruel Commissioner has taken from us. I am afraid without the Reverend, but together we are strong, and cannot stray from the path.

With rioting all around, I knew that the smouldering buildings were the fault of the Commissioner. As we marched on, I noticed many of us were collapsing of dizziness. I was starting to feel sick too, but I had to be strong, and follow the path with the Reverend.

The Reverend told us, “The bodies you see before you are plagued with sin. They remain in the dirt from whence they came. But those who are strong may rise above. Be strong with your Shepard” I knew our group was strong. None of us had ever fallen to the dirt. We are strong. Those who had fallen were followers of the Commissioner. They fall, and soon will the Commissioner.

I fell to the ground, my head throbbing. I could tell that my body was convulsing. Footsteps pounded the dirt, and voices shook my head. “You greedy little fuck-head, you don’t belong here,” one voice said. “You are a filthy, sinful man,” said another. “You think small Commissioner, you only used it too get people out of your way, never profiting, and never rising and becoming greater,” uttered the first. “Damn-it White, your greed destroyed my city,” yelled the second. “I saw my chance, and I took it. This city was untouched as far as I was concerned. You have no idea how to use something like this. You squandered your time, now its mine.” I heard two explosions and felt wetness on my body. Then blackness took over.

“You’ve been out for quite a while,” a soft female voice said to me. “Don’t get up. You still have a lot of recovering to do.” I wondered if someone was really there or if I was imagining this. I was in a bed. A hospital bed? The sheets felt cool against my skin. Someone was still there though. I heard footsteps. “Hello?” I said, hoping someone would answer me. “So, you’re not going back to sleep eh? Well... ok... maybe you are well enough to hear,” said the voice. “I thought I went deaf,” I asked in a concerned voice, mustering up enough panic as my feeble body would allow me to. She sighed, “No... a lot of people thought they went deaf, but that’s not what happened.” “Well tell me what happened!” I pleaded. She sighed again and said, “Since you’re Officer Kerwin, maybe it will be ok. Do you remember the warehouse that was broken into?” “Yes,” I answered. Who could forget. “Inside were an experimental broadcasting helmet. They allowed the wearer to manipulate the thoughts and memories of other people. They were intended to help doctors aid trauma victims overcome ordeals.” “Oh no!” I said, my heart pounding, “The Reverend and the Commissioner must have fallen victim! I should have saved them! But I’m such an incompetent and boob, I couldn’t save anyone.” She sighed again and said reassuringly, “Calm down, please sir. You’re far too hard on yourself. You poor thing, those guys really did a job on you.” Unsure of what she meant, I asked her to explain. She told me that three years ago the had Commissioner stolen a helmet and victimized his officers. Reverend White had done something similar, but was much more articulate. As a result, he commanded the technology better and was able to manipulate most of the city. He really knew how to scare the money out of people. I felt like such an idiot... Was there any hope for me? “Now get some rest,” she said to me, “we need good officers like you.”