

UNCLE MURRAY'S ETERNAL NAP:

What the fuck am I doing here? This was the thought of Murray Fisher. A man who was in a bitter mood, he was always bitter, but today ... oh *today!* What was there to say about today? It was horrendous, those parasites were waltzing over to his home like they owned the place. Leeching his earnings, touching *his* things. Of course they'd ooo and ahh, and coddle him like a baby, even though he was the senior! But it was all a front. Fatso, piggy, serpent and his son John were all coming to take and steal. Well he would watch them, oh he would. Nothing could make him sleep a wink as long as they were in HIS house.

John was the driver of the car. Donna sat next to him while Nicky and Ricky were in the backseat. The group was nearing the house on 9 Barthloe street, his father Murray awaiting them. John brakeed and turned around.

"Alright everyone, remember not to talk about religion, war or politics. You don't want to encourage him."

"Yeah, yeah." Donna mockingly agreed.

"Donna! I'm serious. Remember last year when you started talking about abortion... "

"Come off it! He asked me my views, it's not my fault the man is insane."

"Then just switch the topic... Ricky, what are you doing?"

Ricky and his brother Nicky were both large in weight and at that moment, Ricky had pulled out a sandwich.

"Ricky, why? You know how Uncle Murray reacts when he sees you eat!" John exasperated.

"I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry. Alright everyone, let's go, chop chop."

The group of four made it to the porch and John knocked on the door. The weary Uncle Murray opened the door, a grimace washed over his face. There was a moment of silence, John felt his heart strain, wondering if something was wrong. Then Uncle Murray spoke.

"Well, why are you standing there like fucking chairs?"

The group entered and the celebration commenced. Well a celebration is one word for it, an hour into the proceedings an argument had ensued.

"Don't you understand! They're molesting children! The Catholic Church is a corrupt and frankly disgusting institution." Donna declared.

"No! Church is and always has been a good thing. It teaches values and builds character, something your generation severely lacks." Murray retorted.

John checked his watch and while Donna and his father were at each other's throats, he remarked how they beat last year's record of starting an argument by twenty minutes. Donna had a fury in her eyes that, if looks could kill, father would

have been chopped to bits; not that Donna would be better off, she would just be strangled and hung upside down in the kitchen instead.

"That's it! I'm done! This is my birthday and I demand peace and quiet! I'm out of here."

"You see! You do this every time! When you're losing the argument, you walk away like a coward!"

"Fuck you, you Communist bitch!"

"Communist? Please, walk away like you did from your friends in Vietnam!"

At that moment, Murray charged at her and struck her across the face so hard she was catapulted across the room. Everyone was dead silent.

"This party is over! I'm going to... Fatso!"

Nicky was pillaging the chocolate bowl which contained a few dozen small milk packets.

"You fat bastard! If you touch that bowl one more time, I'll smash it on your faces! And you too, piggy! Yeah, don't think I don't see you eyeing the Hors d'oeuvres! All of you are parasites!"

Murray huffed his way into the kitchen, John followed him.

"Father, Father. Please, let's calm down now..."

"Calm down?! You want me to calm down?! You saw what she said!"

"Father, look. You're just a little agitated, how about I make you some tea and we can ease off on the politics, ok?"

Murray looked at him and sighed.

"Oh, very well. I need to rest, anyway."

"Very good. Just sit down, I'll get you that tea. Green?"

"No! I was a botanist, remember? I have a special herb mix in the black container. The perfect tea."

Donna caressed her cheek. In all likelihood a bruise would develop there. She saw John entering and he rushed to her, his face blanketed in fright.

"Are you all right, Donna?"

"Not really. Your father is a mad bastard."

"He's yours too, you know."

"I highly doubt he remembers that..."

Her voice was solemn and the conversation died. John noticed that his father's threat seemed to work. The chocolate was left intact despite Nicky's quivering, saliva coated lips gaping open in longing.

"John!" Murray cried from the other room.

"This tea is awfully bitter. Are you sure you put the right mix?"

"How old is it?" John asked.

"Oh, I don't know. I made it a while ago."

"Well, that explains it. It's probably stale."

"Hmm."

The strange noise that came from Murray did not affect John. He turned back to Donna.

"Let's have a drink, it'll soothe your nerves."

As John began pouring some champagne he saw his father dash into the next room, crashing a vase as he ran.

"Father, what are you doing?"

"Told you, he's lost the plot."

"Father!"

Murray peaked his head out and quickly went up the stairs, stumbling as he struggled to stay steady.

"I'm fine! Just going for a nap."

Donna shook her head ever so softly either in pity or in disapproval (most likely the latter) and went back to her champagne. The next thing John knew he was half on the couch, half on the floor snoring so loud you wouldn't hear a body thud. Which is exactly what happened...

It was late morning, around eleven o'clock, when John shuffled himself up into a sitting position, Donna had her head resting on cake leftovers while Nicky and Ricky were lying on the kitchen counter, the potato chips devoured. John stood up and groggily made his way to the kitchen to make a coffee. After he had, he approached the chocolate bowl but noticed the entire thing was empty. Only discarded wrappers.

'Oh, those arseholes,' John thought to himself. He went over to the rocks that were the bodies of Nicky and Ricky with a jug of ice cold water and splashed them head to toe. The pair immediately woke up in panic.

"Ok, which one of you pricks ate all the chocolate?"

Nicky and Ricky looked at each other.

"Well it wasn't me!"

They both said at the same time. The fire in John's eyes made the pair quail.

"I didn't want Uncle Murray to smash it on my head!"

"Me neither!"

John huffed in disappointment.

"Wh-what's going on guys?" A loud yawn announced the awakening of Donna.

"Chocolates are gone. As always. "

"It wasn't me!"

"Or me!"

"Shut up, I'm gonna wake up father."

John went up the stairs and knocked on Murrays door.

"Father. Wake up!"

Silence was the only one to answer.

"Father!"

If he was in there, he wasn't talking.

"Father, it's time to wake up!"

Not an iota of auditory projection crept through that door. John, already frustrated, gently opened the door. Murray was on his bed in a disordered position, the blanket lay on the floor.

"Dad, wake up. It's eleven."

John shook him but he wouldn't budge. Donna went up to his face and screamed.

"Wake up, asshole!!!"

John's concern was at an all time high. He put his fingers on his fathers neck and John's stomach dropped. There was no pulse.

"Quick, Donna! Help me get him in the living room!" He commanded.

The two dragged Murray's body and placed him on the couch and the four guests circled around him. Donna's lips tightened at the sight of him, Nicky was biting his nails and Ricky his tongue. John breathed in and spoke.

"Well... he's dead."

Several minutes of silence dragged on, Nicky shoved his hands in his pockets while Ricky shoved them down his trousers for no explicable reason. Donna merely bobbed her head; eventually the first to break silence was Donna.

"Say, are we going to Five Guys tonight?"

John turned to her, his face as red as a pomegranate.

"Are you fucking serious right now?"

"What? I want to make sure we can stick to our plans"

"Our father is dead and you're talking about Five Guys!"

"Well, *your* father, *my* step-father."

"And?!"

Nicky chirped in.

"Oh, yeah. He was our uncle so we can be less sad."

"Wow... I didn't realise I was surrounded by a bunch of heartless bastards."

John said in absolute disbelief.

"Well, we learned from the most heartless of all bastards. You reap what you sow."

Donna's statement was both a slap in the face to John and yet completely, unequivocally correct.

"I don't know if I like being around a dead body though. Even if it is Uncle Murray's." Ricky shuddered.

"You're right. This was fun but we should call the police." Donna said, phone already in hand. John snatched her arm mid-input.

"Wait! Just... wait a minute."

"What? You want to stand around in silence some more?" Donna asked in her usual mocking way.

"No, I mean... maybe... we shouldn't call anyone."

"What?! You were the one who was so pissy..."

"I understand, I understand." John took a pause, articulating his thoughts.

"This looks bad for us. If the police get here, they're going to start an investigation on why a perfectly healthy man has just dropped dead for no apparent reason."

"He probably had an aneurysm or something, it happens all the time. It's not 'The Murder of Rodger Akyrod.'" Donna replied.

“Yes, but he was cleaner than a germaphobe's anus and healthier than an ox. You really think the police are going to believe he died of natural causes?”

“What are you saying?” Donna asked in a wavy tone.

John looked at the group, his head drooped down.

“I'm saying ... The last people he was around hated his guts and, after a rather loud argument, he's found dead. It does look suspicious.”

Donna gulped, finally catching on to John's point. Ricky, however, still wasn't convinced.

“But - but. The police will know ... we need to tell the truth.”

John went up to Ricky and grasped his shoulders.

“Ricky, remember what Uncle Murray used to tell you?”

“Don't tell anyone about us?”

“N-no. The other thing.”

“Would you like to play with Uncle's hairy meat whistle?”

“Jesus Christ, no.”

He went closer to Ricky. His face filled with sincerity.

“If you're ever in trouble ... always lie. Never tell the truth. If they catch you on a lie, tell more lies until your entire existence is a lie.”

Ricky nodded, his eyes filled with understanding.

“That's so wise.”

“I know.”

John went back to the centre of the group.

“So are we all agreed?”

Everyone nodded their heads.

“Good. Let's get to covering this up.”

The group split up according to John's plan. Donna would be downstairs scouting the door while the guys would carry the body upstairs.

“Alright, you see that lady there.”

John pointed out the window to an old woman on her porch across the street.

“Make the body stand upright in front of the window.”

“But he's so heavy,” Nicky complained.

“Just do it.”

Nicky and Ricky huffed and puffed, but after a while they successfully placed the body upright. The old woman looked up and saw Murray, she waved cheerfully.

“Wave back!” John ordered.

Clumsily, Ricky managed to shake the arm in a wave-like motion.

“Phew. Now we have a witness to him being alive.”

However, the woman stood up and began moving towards the house.

“Wait, no! Shit. Keep the body there!” John told them as he rushed down the stairs.

“It's Mrs. Tiffany. She's coming to the house!” Donna reported

“I didn't realise she was even alive. I swear she withered to a bag of bones.”

“Me too. I guess it's that Mandela effect that people go on about.” Donna said. The bag of bones that was Mrs. Tiffany was on the porch now.

“What are we going to do?” John asked, the strain gripped his chest so hard he feared he would have a heart attack.

“Just stay calm.”

A knock echoed across the living room.

“Murray. Murray, dear, come open the door. I know you’re home.”

John’s heart began to beat on his chest, the old woman was trying to peek through the drapes. He looked at Donna and nodded as he slowly approached the door, yanking it open.

“Oh, hello luv. I’m Marge Tiffany and ...”

She tilted her head and looked at him.

“Is that you, John?”

John thinly smiled and nodded.

“Oh, it’s been so long. How’ve you been, dearie?”

“You know, the usual.”

“How’s your father, I needed to speak with him about something.”

“He’s just ...”

“Busy.”

Donna popped up from behind John with a grin.

“Oh, Donna, dear. You’ve grown so fast. It’s so nice to see both of you. May I come in?”

Donna and John looked at each other.

“Well, it’s just ...”

“You see ...”

“It’s just not a very good time ...”

“And we’re very busy.”

Mrs. Tiffany smiled.

“Don’t worry dears, it will only be a moment. You’ll barely know I was here.”

‘I barely knew you here for ten years, you ancient skin sack.’ John thought.

She passed through the barrier the two people made, slowing down looking at the mess in the living room.

“Must have been a very exciting night.” Mrs. Tiffany remarked. Donna winced at the statement, lifting her hand to her still slightly red cheek. Mrs. Tiffany wiped away some of the chip crumbs and took a seat on one of the armchairs and John and Donna took a seat on the couch across from her.

“Would you like some tea, Mrs. Tiffany?” John asked.

“Oh, yes, tea would be lovely luv. Green, if you don’t mind. I’m aware your father used to make all those lovely mixes for tea during his gardening career, although I always hated those. Too sweet, for me. Does he still make those, luv?”

“Well, he was a botanist not a ‘gardener’ but yes, he still makes those. I gave him one last night.”

“Well that’s wonderful ... So, you said Murray was busy?”

“Yeah, yeah. He’s, um...”

“Making some new products! He’s taking art courses.”

Donna interjected, saving John the embarrassment.

“Oooh. That sounds just lovely. When did he start?”

“Um ...”

“Two months ago, he’s working with a corporation and giving them his ... products.”

John intervened.

“Well, he never told me. Although, is he really already working with some fancy company? Although, your father has always been very ambitious, I suppose. What does he make?”

“Well ... He makes ...”

Sweat dripped down Donna’s eyes, her brain had forgotten how to speak. She pulled out the first thing that came to mind.

“CONDOMS!”

John stared at her, petrified. Mrs. Tiffany was taken aback.

“Condoms?”

Donna, too embarrassed to speak, merely nodded her head.

“Oh, well. We all have *something*, I suppose.”

Mrs. Tiffany remarked solemnly. The silence was suffocating and John was the first to break the ice.

“I’ll go make you that tea.”

“Oh, yes. Thank you dear.”

As John made the tea his mind ticked away. His plan was ruined as now this ‘*guest*’ had seen and communicated with them. Not to mention, his ‘good fathers’ memory has been tarnished due to his newly birthed secret condom industry that was going to spread and infect the whole neighbourhood by the end of the day. It was never supposed to be like this. If only he hadn’t listened to those sweet whispers ... Now was not the time, however. He’d get this crone out of the house and then clean this mess up.

He returned with the tea. Mrs. Tiffany thanked him as he passed by and made some remark about the weather and began jabbering about some bloody baking contest. A timid tap on the wall alerted John to Nicky, who was hiding in the kitchen, urging him silently to come.

“May you excuse me.”

John rushed to the kitchen and Nicky led him over to Murray’s bedroom.

“What happened?”

“So, while we were waiting we searched Uncle Murray’s room.”

“You searched my dead fathers bedroom?”

“Yes, but that’s not the point. We searched his desk, in his desk we found a drawer, in his drawer we found a phone, on the phone we found an app, on the app we found a calendar, on the calendar we found some writing.”

“What did it say?”

“You can read it yourself.”

John took the phone and saw his father, naked, winking to the camera.

“Ummm, a naked picture?”

“Oh, shit. Sorry.”

He took the phone and swiped a few times.

“Here.”

John looked inside the digital calendar for that night’s ‘House gathering with the Society of British Botanists’. John let out a loud yelp.

“They’re coming t-t-tonight?!”

John exhaled stiffly. No, no, no. This was all wrong ; everything was ruined. How was he going to get away with this now? He chewed his thumb and turned to Nicky.

“Stay here, I’ll deal with this.”

John rushed downstairs to reunite with Donna and Mrs. Tiffany.

“Mrs. Tiffany, look, we’ve forgotten the buns for tonight’s dinner and we really can’t afford to leave the house so ... if you’d be so kind ...”

Mrs. Tiffany’s smiling face was knowing and her eyes filled with realisation.

“Oh. You want me to go get them for you dear?”

“If it’s not a bother.”

“Of course, luv. I’ll be back in a jiffy.”

Mrs. Tiffany slowly made her way to the door, her little feet took ages to make it to the door. The moment she crossed the threshold, John slammed the door, and, quick as a cat, rushed to the kitchen.

“We need to do this quickly!”

“Do what?!” Donna asked.

“We need to show that we left but also that father was alive AFTER we were gone.”

“But that’s impossible.”

“I’ve got an idea.”

And in five minutes, everyone was ready. Donna, Nicky and Ricky were in the car, waiting outside the house while John had gone and dressed himself in Murray’s gardening clothes, obscuring his face. Murray himself was propped out on an armchair in the guest room. Mrs Tiffany had returned with the buns and saw the car. She approached the group.

“Oh, if this isn’t a wonderful surprise. Nicky! Ricky! How are you both doing, dears?”

“Lovely, Mrs. Tiffany.”

“Just fine, Mrs. Tiffany.”

“Where are you heading off to?”

“We’re just going out for a few days.”

Mrs. Tiffany nodded her head.

“Where’s John?”

“Oh, he’s just sleeping in the back.”

Donna pointed to a bundle of blankets in the backseat covering some backpacks. Mrs. Tiffany smiled.

“Alright, dears. Have a good time.”

The group drove away and turned a corner. Then, making sure they were out of sight, they stopped.

“Now we have to wait until John gives us the signal. He’ll call us and then we’ll pick him up and leave.”

Donna hoped nothing would go wrong.

John wobbled his way to the garden in the oversized pants he had found in Murray’s closet. He was wearing a thick hat that covered his facial features. And while he may not have fit into the clothes, he was tall enough to be able to pass as his father. He grabbed a spade and began his ‘work’ on the front lawn. All he’d need was for someone to spot him and then he’d be able to put this mess behind him.

He reflected on what he did on that fateful day, before he made the decision.

‘He’ll only cause more trouble. The money’s better in your hands.’ The words echoed in his head.

But why did he listen?

Sure, all it took was a pinch in the tea to start all this, but did he really want to?

Did he really need to?

But now was not the time for regrets. Now was time for action.

“Oh, Murray!”

John moved his head slightly, not wanting to turn. It was Mrs. Tiffany.

“I’ve been looking everywhere for you, luv.”

Mrs. Tiffany approached him. John’s heart was racing, if he talked then he was done.

“Listen, Murray. I’ve been thinking, we really ...”

Thwack.

Donna was waiting in the car. The waiting had become unbearable. What if he was caught? If something happened then everything would be ruined, all the years of torture under that roof. She remembered all the pain her step-father put her through. How he would yell at her to go hide in the closet, how he would belittle her, telling her that she was never good enough and of course the worst crime she had ever committed to him. The crime of being a girl. The old bastard’s sperm stopped working so he had to get another child. He met her mother on a trip to Yorkshire and she told him she had a son. He married her so that he could have another boy. But, of course, her mother convinced him to sign a prenuptial agreement so that he couldn’t back out of the marriage. She remembered when he was introduced to his new child. Donna was only eight then, only two years younger than John ; a little girl who was excited to have a father, to have a dad who would take her on his back and show her the world. Who would guide and protect her. When he had walked into the room, she wanted him to run up to her and hug her with open arms. And then he saw her. The look on his face. That look was ingrained in her, that look haunted her dreams, it followed her everywhere she went. That look was there for every achievement, every failure, every hour of every day of every week. The look of disappointment. Donna’s teeth clenched her lip, until blood dripped down. He wasn’t disappointed in one thing though. She remembered when she was just a little girl, in her room. How her step father would sneak in at one in the morning, always after some argument with her mother. He would come up behind her and he’d whisper

'You cannot tell anyone'. Her heart would sink whenever he came, he'd only take half an hour. He'd touch her hair or her face or her waist ; he touched other things as well ... When he was done, he'd walk away and treat her the same as he always had. With contempt and hatred. When she talked to John that day she remembered what she said. 'He would only cause trouble.' Even in death, he had to cause problems, even in death he was there to give her one last punishment. She wished she burned him alive instead.

Then her phone rang. It was John.

"John! Is everything alright? What happened?"

"We have ... a problem."

Back in the house the group was surrounding 'the problem.'

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

Donna exclaimed. Mrs. Tiffany's dead body laid there on the rug.

"It's not what it looks like ..."

"You *killed* Mrs. Tiffany!"

"No! Well ... yes, but ..."

"If we weren't going to get in trouble with the police before we most certainly are now!"

John looked down at his feet.

"Well, perhaps we can make it look like an accident."

Donna was flabbergasted.

"An ... accident?"

She whispered.

"How can we ... make it look like an accident ... when *HER FUCKING HEAD IS CAVED IN 10 CM!*"

Donna breathed in deeply, staring daggers at John. Although daggers sounds too friendly, perhaps the fires of hell would be a more apt comparison and even that sounds quite tame. Despite the obvious fury, she desperately tried to keep composure, not for John's sake but for the fact that she did not wish to attract the neighbours.

"How did this even happen, John?"

John felt the fire underneath Donna, egging him on to confess.

"Look ... it wasn't intentional. I - I panicked."

At that point, Donna rolled her eyes.

"She came up behind me and I knew if she saw me it would blow our cover. There'd be questions."

"So you bludgeoned her with a shovel?"

"I was nervous."

"Nervous?! Bloody hell, I better give you a Xanax, otherwise I'll be the next one to get hit on the head."

"It's not ..."

"You're unstable! Next thing we know you'll go around murdering the entire neighbourhood! You're sick! You're ..."

At this point, John dashed towards Donna, slamming her against the wall with a thud so powerful that the ornaments on the mantelpiece came crashing down.

"I'm not the killer here!! I'm not the one with murderous intentions! I'm not the one who talked about all the money we could make, how we could make it look like an accident, how we would cover it up, how to use these two fat idiots to distract him! I didn't kill my father!!!"

"Oh really?! Well that's fucking rich! Who poisoned him, *huh?* No, really, I wonder, who retrieved that vial? I wonder how its contents got into that tea? 'Cuz you're so fucking innocent, *right!?* Blame me all you want, in fact, why don't you just burn me at the stake while you're at it. Point and laugh at the evil jealous skank, *hm!* But you listened to me, you went with the plan. Could have said no, but you pulled it off, you pulled off the kill. *You killed your father, not me!*"

Donna shoved John onto the coffee table, shattering the glass. John grabbed a candle stick and tackled Donna. Nicky and Ricky tried to stop the fight but nothing could prevent the blind rage and hatred these two felt. Well, one thing could and one thing did. The kettle that started to boil. The group fell silent, the kettle had been stopped and a humming was heard. The group slowly inched their way towards the sound, the humming grew loud enough that the tune became audible. It was Rule, Britannia being recited in a baritone voice. John was about to enter first when Donna stopped him.

"Wait a second." Donna whispered. She grabbed a statue of the cross and brandished it as a weapon. She turned to John and nodded before leaping out into the kitchen. John did not see what she saw, she merely dropped the statue, absolutely petrified.

"What? What is it?" Nicky asked. Donna did not answer. John shoved out into the kitchen and saw the absolutely devastating sight. John's heart dropped in his chest at viewing it. It was worse than seeing a ghost, or rather, it's equivalent. It was none other than Murray Fishbar, the man himself, singing Brittanica while making a cup of tea, very much not dead.

"Oh, you're finally done there. I didn't hear what you were saying but if you broke anything, you're paying."

Even the crickets were silent.

"Have you lost your tongues? Did you punch them out? Why are you so fucking quiet and why couldn't you be so when you were babes?"

At this point, Donna let out a piercing scream.

It took around fifteen minutes for the shock and panic to subside. Murray had successfully managed to get everyone sitting in the lounge, the coffee table still shattered. Murray had made everyone some tea and sat on his grand armchair. No one dared speak, although John did remark on how bitter the tea Murray served them was. Eventually, Murray cleared his throat and spoke.

"You all look like I came back from the grave. Why are you all so disturbed?"

"You ... how ... you had no pulse."

John managed to mutter. Murray merely smiled. Not a warm, kind smile or even a pitiful one. This smile was filled with malice, it had disgust and it had contempt, it had hatred and even a hint of sadistic joy.

“You thought I was dead, is that it? No, I just took a rather long nap.”

He chuckled, no one followed his lead so he continued.

“Perhaps we should take it from the beginning then, hmm? I understand you were very, very eager to see ‘mean old Uncle Murray’ die an early death but I can assure you I’m much ... more resilient than that. You see, I came very prepared. I have a great deal of enemies that I’ve made over a lifetime and I’d rather not be caught off guard. So when I invite four of my greatest enemies into my home on a day of celebration, well ... let’s just say I was going to ensure I make the night. It was a rather clever distraction with Nicky and Ricky, I’ll give you that.”

“What are you talking about?”

Nicky was the one who asked the question but Ricky seemed just as confused.

“Oh, well of course you don’t know the reason but, if I recall correctly, John most likely arranged for you to attempt to snatch the chocolates, perhaps under the code word ‘This party is over.’ Yes, it was well timed and I was rather confused at first. You were unusually tight lipped, your wandering hands, although wandering pudges would be more correct, were kept relatively still. I was immediately suspicious but, of course, you were merely waiting for those chocolates.”

Nicky and Ricky gaped at each other. Murray brought back his smile of malice and continued.

“Such a loud distraction, using your gluttony to draw my attention away from the danger ahead. A little pinch of powder in my canister of tea. What do they call it? Ah, Tresacyn. Also known as The Black Streak. A rather deadly poison, in ten minutes even the healthiest person would fall into the deep sleep of death.”

“Father, I -”

At this point, Murray leaped up and grabbed John’s chin. He struck him violently.

“Do not speak! You had your chance.”

Murray glared at him for a second before bringing back that sinister smile.

“This is my story now.”

Murray returned to the chair.

“Of course, it was Donna’s idea. Who else would it be? But you, my only son, *you* slipped that powder into my tea. You may not be the brain but you were the hand. You had just as much to gain. You, logically, deduced that I would leave my rather large inheritance to you. Or was that Donna as well? Anyhaps, that does not matter. You thought that if you could stage this elaborate cover up, you would be able to claim ignorance with a rock solid alibi and shove *my* money in your pockets.”

“But ... how? How are you even alive?”

“Ah. Of course, how did this brilliant plan fail? Well, even if I actually died you would still be caught. It was too much for you. Too many variables and unpredictable

factors got in the way as our poor Mrs. Tiffany here can testify to. Now I was not involved much. I did just three things.”

Murray pulled out his phone and went to the calendar app.

“One. I planted a fake meeting with the ‘Society of British Botanists’ in my calendar.”

“Wait, you mean they're not actually coming?” Ricky asked.

“Precisely. I simply needed a fire under your arse’s for you to make a mistake, at least long enough until I woke up. And you did, thankfully.”

John clenched his chair in anguish, his throat was getting really tense now.

“Two. The big reveal, of course. How is this old bastard alive? Well, I’ll tell you. Did you really think I couldn’t tell the difference between the taste of my tea? I naturally made it very sweet and your, rather lousy, excuse of leaving it to be stale would not make it bitter but in fact would make it much, much sweeter. However, Trescayn has a taste so bitter it overpowers black coffee. So imagine how my poor tea tasted. Now, unless you perform an enema, which I wasn’t in the condition to do at the time, the poison is not curable. Which is probably why this was the one picked. However, there is a counteractant. It cannot entirely stop the poisons work but, with enough intake, can turn death into a rather long nap and put your heart at the bare minimum needed to function. That being the chemical of Theobromine, rather present in the cacao plant. In kola nuts, some tea leaves and ...”

“Chocolate.”

John finished, his face pale.

“Correct. When I realised my life was in danger I went to my saviour. The chocolate.”

“So it was *you* who ate all the chocolates!”

“Correct. I probably took an excessive dosage but I could not take any chances. The chocolate retarded the effects of the poison well enough that instead of dying, I merely took a 29 hour nap.”

John’s hands were shaking. “And the third thing? You said you did three things, what was the third?” Donna asked, her face filled with panic.

An air of superiority began to ooze from Murray. Like a predator who successfully catches its prey.

“Oh, you didn’t understand by this point? I have placed recording devices all around the house. Every conversation, every action, every scheme. Caught and kept.”

At this point, John and Donna stood up. Nick and Ricky were wheezing like pigs, their faces going purple, Donna was clenching her throat while John felt dizzy.

“S-so, what do y-you want then?”

John asked, his words slurring.

“Blackmail? Money?”

At this point, Donna vomited, her eyes bloodshot. While Nicky was coughing excessively, his throat was inflamed to the red of the fires of hell. Ricky was getting increasingly immobile. Murray’s sinister smile crept up.

“No, it’s merely insurance in case I get caught. No, the only thing I want in this

world is to watch you suffer. The only thing I want is to see my wannabe murderers choke on the very poison they gave me.”

Murray went up to John’s ear and whispered.

“That’s right. I gave YOU the poisoned tea. And I’m going to go in tomorrow morning and I’m going to edit this so that it looks like you couldn’t handle the guilt of murdering poor, old, Mrs. Tiffany and committed mass suicide. Then I’d wake up and find your poor bodies here. A good old tragedy for me to feast on. The Society of British Botanists will be so jealous. Or maybe I’ll sell the recordings, just the ones of you choking of course, some people get off on that. Can you imagine? Maybe I’ll get off on that.”

Murray bit John’s ear so hard there was blood. Nicky’s mouth foamed over, the blood mixed in giving a rosy colour to it. Donna tried to grab Murray’s foot but she was too weak to get a hold.

“Oh, look at you. Want to join in on the fun, Donna?”

He took his leg and placed it above Donna’s hand. He put pressure, his foot sinking into the floor and Donna’s fingers under it. Her scream was horrifying, a banshee would have run from it. Murray then began to yell at her.

“This is for Vietnam, you cunt!”

He pushed farther, and John heard joints cracking.

“This is for your baby murder!”

He dug in, the fingers were barely recognizable now. Donna would scream but the vomit choking her was stopping her.

“And this is for Jesus Christ! Lord bless this home!”

He raised his foot and smashed the fingers clean off. At this point, Donna’s eyes rolled back and she was *out*. Murray laughed at her corpse and turned back to John. He whispered to his bitten off ear.

“Maybe I’ll have a little touch session with your corpse like I did when you were younger. It would be rather exciting, wouldn’t it? Maybe I’ll even penetrate this time. You won’t complain.”

He stepped away from John, laughing a wicked cackle and turned around to the mantelpiece, fixing the ornaments that fell. Nicky was already shaking on the ground, the vomit filled blood trailing out onto the floor.

“Do you see!? This is what you meant to do to me! But an upstanding, God fearing man like me, has every right to ... assert his dominance.”

“Uncle Murray. Please. We didn’t know you were going to die. Please ... mercy.” Ricky pleaded. He was the only other one to still be alive. His face was so purple that you could put his head in a grape factory and, aside from the size, he would fit right in.

“I know that you didn’t know. But you want to know why I’m killing you too.”

Murray smiled again. Coming closer to Ricky.

“Because I don’t like you.”

He laughed and turned to his family.

“You all look so much better like this! I wish it would last longer! Nothing has given me more joy.”

John gripped the carpet, his legs had given up all feeling. He crawled to the kitchen, barely seeing anything. He felt a force lift him up and drag him back onto the couch. It was his father. He went to John and looked him in the eye, his stare was oppressive and his face austere.

"I am sorry about this John, I really am. But you pushed me too far."

Murray's lips cracked open into that sinister smile one last time.

"I hope you enjoy your eternal nap."

John was drifting off, he felt fear and panic. It couldn't end like this. He moved his hand ever so slightly to the night table beside him. A UK flag with a sharp end was sitting there. An inaudible statement came out of John's mouth.

"I'm sorry, I didn't catch that. Speak louder." Murray said in a patronising tone.

He leaned forward, his ear next to John's mouth. He garnered the energy to say one thing.

"Go fuck yourself."

He grabbed the flag and stabbed Murray's jugular. His face in shock, the 'God fearing' man collapsed onto the ground. And not another word would come out of that bitter mouth again.

John's eyes faded, the sounds of suffering drowned out. His heartbeat slowed, going ever so small. His lungs stopped inhaling and his nerves shut down. Nothing mattered anymore, John was tired anyway. He just needed some sleep, that's all.

He'd be better when he woke up.