

What sucks more than your parents getting divorced and having to become one of the sole financiers for your household? Losing the job that kept your dad from threatening to cave your skull in. What sucks way more than all of that is lying to your dad with anger issues saying you, in fact, did not lose the job that kept him from threatening to cave your skull in.

Honestly though, jobs are so fucking stupid. Jecka finished school with okay grades and it isn't HER fault her parent's marriage didn't work out, why the hell was she the one who had to shoulder the burden of paying the electricity bill on time? It's honestly—

"—such bullshit.."

"What?"

"Oh, was I not verbalizing any of that?"

"...What are you on?"

"Figures."

Jecka leaned against the concrete wall of the mall, looking down at the sidewalk before dropping her cigarette and stomping it out. She had been out looking for a new job for hours, and had virtually nothing to show for it. She knew if she came home now, there would be a lot of yelling and crying, maybe hitting, and she did *not* want that.

"So, what's the plan?"

She turned her head to the woman beside her, Nicole, a skeptical look on her face. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Fuck if I know. I would rather slit my throat than work anywhere more than a fifteen minute drive away."

"Oh, yeah, because you just need to have those awkward run-ins with our old classmates, right?"

"No, I just want to be able to drive there and not take a fucking metro. And it's not like I'm begging for it, I guess I just have a memorable face?"

"Memorable to some more than others."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

The question went unanswered by Nicole as she also mirrored the motion of stamping out her cigarette onto the ground. Honestly, they were lucky the mall cops never usually checked outside the buildings, this was a "no smoking" zone.

A brief moment of silence hung between the two as the busyness inside the mall played like white noises to their pondering. Nicole's eyes flicked up to Jecka's before she spoke.

"Are you just not gonna get a job?"

"What other choice do I have?"

"Steal shit and sell it on eBay."

"That is so much more work than I'm cut out for, I tried to steal a CD once and you got shot because of it."

"True."

Jecka watched as the other's gaze trailed from her to around the block, tongue noticeably pressed against her cheek as she thought. Jecka wished she could ever have an understanding of what was going through her mind at any giving moment. She's the kind of friend who can send you "guess what" and it could either be the most heinous shit you've ever read or that she got a piercing.

"So stealing from the mall is off limits?"

"Yeah. I'm like, fucked, Nicole. I should just go home and tell dad I lost the job. If I keep up lying it'll be way worse when he finds out."

"Are you crazy? You're just gonna go home and be like 'Oh, hey dad. By the way, I totally lied to you about still having my job, I lost it because the 5'4 pedo manager didn't get to fuck me after hours!'"

"I can't call him a pedo, I'm eighteen now."

"Okay, and how old was he?"

"That is not the point right now. What should I do?"

"You think I'm the right person to give advice on this? I steal shit from the mall and sell it on eBay to make pocket change."

"God, you're right."

Jecka whined as she placed her hands over her face. The weight of the situation was starting to dawn on her. Jesus, her dad is gonna beat the shit out of her. Maybe living with mom and grandma was a better option after all.

"Pause,"

Nicole spoke up, causing Jecka to lift her head out of her hands. Nicole seemed a lot more determined than she did a second ago, less lethargic and more focused.

"Jecka, how much do you love me?"

"You are literally the only friend I retained after high school, so a lot. Why?"

"Can I say something crazy? Like, crackwhore crazy?"

"You act like everything you say isn't borderline crackwhore crazy."

"Do you own anything black?"

"What the fuck, where are you going with this?"

Nicole grabbed onto Jecka's hand pulling her along without much care for Jecka to follow on her own volition.

"What are you doing??"

"Get in the car, drive me to my house now."

"Wait. Can you like, run that whole thing by me again?"

Jecka sat cross-legged on Nicole's bed as she watched her fumble through her closet. She still had no idea where this was going or what Nicole needed black clothing for. Her flimsy explanation went right over Jecka's head and, to be honest, she tuned most of it out completely.

"So, tonight. There's this big festival going on downtown, a little past the mall, right?"

"There is? What is it for?"

"Fuck if I know. All I know is my MOM is going, which basically means anyone with even a slightly functioning brain is going."

Nicole continued to shuffle through her clothing, throwing one loose black hoodie and black

leggings onto the floor. Jecka instinctively picked them up and set them on the bed next to her, not because she was super clean-y or anything, just because she couldn't stand to see any more clothes on Nicole's floor than there already were.

"Alright... So.. What does that mean? Are we gonna, like, go rob everyone in the Cul-de-sac?"

"What? No, that's way too much work."

Nicole turned around and threw a rather low-cut long sleeve black shirt with some kind of neon orange and white design on it on top of Jecka's head.

"Jesus, okay. Then what's all the black clothes and shit for?"

Jecka questioned, taking the shirt off her head and setting it on top of the hoodie. She was greeted with a pair of black ripped jeans decking her in the face soon after.

"We're gonna rob a bank."

"WHAT?"

She quickly stood to her feet as Nicole slammed her closet shut, walking over to the bed to start getting dressed. She picked up the jeans that were thrown at Jecka, picking up the hoodie to prepare.

"What?"

"Nicole, are you fucking insane!? You want me to break into a fucking bank with you?"

"Do *you* have any ideas?"

"I'm sure I could've come up with a lot more before bank robbery."

"Well, now would be a great time for you to start brainstorming then."

Jecka stood agape for a moment, looking at the remaining clothes on the bed as Nicole began undressing. She slowly sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose.

"This shirt isn't even entirely black,"

She picked up the shirt, eyeing the graphic on it. The neon orange and white design seemed to be some fucked-up abstract version of a traffic cone, no outlines really to indicate what exactly it could be but it was her best guess.

"I have black spray paint in the garage."

"Doesn't spray paint like, not stick to clothes— hold on, where did you even get this?"

"Uh, I actually don't remember. Sometimes shit just pops up in my closet."

"That's not a good sign."

"Anyways, we're gonna go tonight right when the festival is about to start, maybe there won't even be any cops there."

"Of COURSE there's going to be cops there, Nicole. It's a fucking bank."

Her complaints didn't seem to be stopping Nicole much, though. She was already half-dressed in her all-black outfit.

"Yeah, so, I'll be generous and take 40% of whatever we steal, okay?"

"Oh my god, that's what this is about? Are you serious?"

"I said 'how much do you love me' not 'I love you'."

It took Jecka a second to properly process this, but eventually...

"Fuck it, jail is better than being gutted by my dad."

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Jecka and Nicole pressed their backs against the red bricked walls of the alleyway, slowly sneaking through to the thin walkways as their shoes squeaked on the wet concrete. The riots of the festival cheered a few streets down, the cars parked for miles and miles in anticipation. She still had no clue what the festival was for.

Jecka brought a clenched fist up to her mouth and coughed into it, which Nicole quickly retorted with a slap to her shoulder.

"Ouch— Fuck, what was that for?"

"Are you trying to get us caught?"

"No, I'm trying to breathe after you doused this shirt in black spray paint in a not-so-ventilated area without warning me."

Jecka grabbed onto the sticky fabric with the tips of her fingers, pulling them back to find them coated in the same black paint which was clearly not dried.

"Well, get your emphysema out now, because if you cough in this place, we are getting lit up."

"Jesus, okay."

Despite being given this offer, she tried her best to keep her coughs from escaping her lips. She wiped her damp black-tipped fingers on the black leggings she was given. The two girls lurked closer to the building, now facing a steel chain-link fence that blocked off the back of the building.

"Get on my shoulders."

"What?"

"I said get on my fucking shoulders, how else are we going to get up this?"

"No, no, I get that. I just mean, like, what about you?"

"You're gonna catch me if I lose my footing on the way over."

"You would either fucking crush me or you would splat on the ground."

"Are you calling me fat?"

"No, I have horrible reflexes and I weigh ninety pounds."

Nicole scoffed off the comment and crouched down enough, motioning for Jecka to get on her shoulders like she asked before. Reluctantly, the blonde climbed onto Nicole's back and up onto her shoulders. This gave her enough leverage to grab onto the chain-link fence and crawl her way over, trying to avoid the spikes of the steel at the top.

She let out a breath of air she was holding in as her shoes clacked against the ground. As she turned around, Nicole was already scaling the fence, leading to a sense of dread to fill Jecka. She held her arms out in front of her in case Nicole did fall, even if she did know she would be about as much help as toilet paper in the place of tampons.

Thankfully, though, Nicole's feet hit the ground right beside Jecka, leading her to look at her with a deadpan stare. Jecka quickly returned her arms to cross over her chest as to not look like a fool.

"So, now what?"

"We have to crawl onto the roof."

"Why the roof? There's a door right there."

"Yeah, Jecka, let's just go through the door to the bank in the dead of night since it will absolutely have no consequences."

"Fine, whatever."

Jecka didn't really have anything else to say about that, she was right. Scarily right, actually. Had Nicole just started breaking and entering since high school? Surely she wasn't entirely supporting herself from eBay sales. Who was Jecka to judge though?

Or maybe she was just really stupid and didn't consider how dumb just walking into the place they were robbing sounded.

Nicole yanked on Jecka's hand as she tugged her towards the dumpster, yanking her out of her daydream.

"Ew, woah, back up."

"Chill, it's closed. We need to crawl onto it."

Nicole took the initiative, crawling onto the roof of the dumpster, Jecka being dragged along behind her. As they both found their footing on the slick plastic of the dumpster roof, Nicole let go of her hold on Jecka's wrist to grab onto the roof's edge and pull herself up. Jecka looked on as she waited as Nicole scrambled her way onto the roof.

"Do you, like... need help?"

"Hff– F.. Fuck you, I can do it myself."

"No, come on, don't do this."

"Shut up."

"I can just boost you up. Here, I insist, seriously."

Nicole grumbled out an insult but Jecka grabbed her waist and lifted her up with all the strength her measly skinny arms could muster. Nicole grunted as she planted her knees on the roof, turning around to offer a hand down to help Jecka up.

"Ahh, no, I can do it myself."

Jecka mocked, reaching for Nicole's hand before she quickly yanked it back.

"If you're gonna be like that, you can climb up yourself, bitch."

"I was just joking, Jesus."

Jecka offered her hand out again, which Nicole decided to take before pulling on it to help Jecka onto the roof as well. An exasperated noise left her mouth as she got onto the roof, Nicole taking a second to check up on her before letting go of her hand and standing on her feet. Jecka did the same as Nicole brushed her knees.

Honestly, the roof seemed a lot flatter when you were directly on top of it. The only things on the roof worth mentioning was a busted up roof turbine and two big metal boxes. Jecka couldn't even quite make out what they were.

"So, what now?"

"Here, come here."

Nicole crouched down, motioning to one of the metal boxes. Jecka's eyebrows knitted together as she crouched as well and tentatively followed Nicole.

"Honestly, it's kind of concerning that you know so much about this.."

"You visit any shock sites?"

"Not really."

"Really? The ones where you watch people die and stuff? I saw a video of a dude breaking into a museum and getting shot by cops on one of them."

"...Comforting."

"It's fine. I'm a visual learner, trust me."

"If I didn't trust you, I guess I wouldn't be here."