

Vagabond's Ventures

INTRODUCTION

Ladies and gentlemen, it's the dawn of a new era! **The Coalition for Better Treatment of Displaced Persons**, founded just a few short weeks ago, is officially up and running, thanks in no small part to the man they call Vagabond! Dozens of homeless have already been fed, clothed, medically cleared, and placed in proper housing, with more people coming in daily. So what inspired Vagabond to spearhead this initiative, you might ask? Well, a lot's been going on since Vagabond signed with the XWF... most of which has been kept secret, and not by choice.

You see, before now, Vagabond had to tread real lightly to make sure his brother didn't get whacked by the mob. True story, y'all. He had no choice but to take a dive in his first match with the XWF, and he was suppose to lose his tag team match against **Barney Green** and **Calypso**, but **Isaiah King** went and screwed *that* up by winning. In retaliation, Bob Ceronie (yes, THEE Bob Ceronie—head of the **Sweet South Mafia**) started extorting even more money out of Vagabond with the threat of bodily harm hanging over his brother's head.

Then why didn't he just go to the cops, you wonder?

Because mobsters are notorious for paying off crooked cops—either to turn a blind eye, or to do the blinding—Vagabond knew he couldn't go to the LEOs for help. So, having no choice but to play along with The SSM a while longer, Vagabond found himself to be a candle burning at both ends. On the one hand, he was forbidden from looking good in front of the XWF Universe or else he might garner too much attention. On the other hand, he couldn't be so bad that he got himself fired. Oh, what a thin line he had to walk!

But here's the good news...

Some good ol' boys located in the great state of Texas banded together and got Vagabond's brother out safely. These people were complete strangers, but it didn't stop them from helping a family in need. Now Vagabond looks to give back to that community... and as the founder of the CBTDP, it looks like he's off to a solid start.



Shaun Fitz a.k.a. "Vagabond"

Founder of the Coalition For Better Ttreatment of Displaced Persons

Obviously anybody with a heart would want to keep their family safe, but Nolan Fitz is extra special to his brother, Shaun.

Shaun Fitz was the first born, and his identical twin came along approximately six minutes later. Right now you're probably thinking six minutes isn't that long, but those minutes sure felt like years for Wesley and Rose, the twins' parents, once the doctor realized that their second child was suffocating on his umbilical cord. So for six minutes, Every. Second. Counted.

Straight away, the doctor and nurses could tell something wasn't right when finally they were able to extricate him from the womb. He wasn't making any noise. He wasn't breathing, and his heart wasn't beating. Fortunately, this part of the story had a positive outcome. He survived.

On the outside **Nolan Fitz** looked completely normal, but as the boys started getting older people noticed he wasn't quite keeping up with Shaun mentally. The "official" diagnosis was Asperger's Syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder, but the terminology and such has changed over the years.

"**So what if he's a little different?**" Were an 8-year-old Shaun's exact words when their parents sat him down and explained what all the doctors and specialists were going off about. "**I love him either way. I promise I'll always look after him.**"

That promise, Shaun has kept for the past 27 years. For the most part, anyway. Nolan sometimes likes to go off on his own, which is what happened in early 2023 when he got kidnapped by Bob Ceronie's cronies. We've been through all that already, so let's just move along to present day, shall we?

2023

Timestamp: Saturday, May 27th at approximately 4PM Central Standard Time

Location: The Church of Ladders and Paints Hardware Store (**Texas**)

"You promise?"

Nolan, helping Shaun stock merchandise at **The Church of Ladders and Paints** (the hardware store they co-own, along with **Joey**—who you'll get the chance to meet soon enough), asks while watching Shaun cut open another big box of assorted doodads and trinkets.

"**I promise I'm not mad at you, Nolan,**" Shaun says, glancing up from one knee as he closes the blade on his box-cutter and slips it into the back pocket of his baby blue jeans. He grabs a handful of the smaller product, stands up, and starts looking for their homes on the pegboard in front of them. After a brief period of silence, Shaun turns his head to look at Nolan to make sure he had heard him.

"You all right, kid?"

"I didn't mean for any of that to happen. If I had just listened to you and stayed home, none of that stuff would've happened."

"None of that stuff," Shaun echoes, "was your fault. Don't go blaming yourself for things you didn't even know about. Those people used you in order to get to me, but those people have been dealt with. All that matters is that you're back and we're together again."

"So let the healing begin?" Nolan says with a shy smile.

Shaun glances at Nolan, then sets a box of staples in its place on the shelf.

"Yeah, Nolan. Let the healing begin," Shaun smiles back at him. "You've been practicing your meditations, I see. That's good. Very good."

Over yonder, the bell above the door rings signaling that someone else has entered the store.

"I'll get it," Joey calls out from a few aisles away.

"Shaun?"

"Yeah, bud?"

"Are things going to go back to normal now?"

"Just as soon as I take care of things in the XWF."

"I thought you said that you wouldn't be caught dead in the XWF?"

"Noooo, I believe I said I'd get *killed* in the XWF. And speaking of people saying things, didn't you say you'd help me put this freight away?"

Nolan grabs a handful of stuff out of the box, tossing a pack of electrical tape to his brother and pointing out exactly where it goes without even looking. A real stockboy savant, this guy.

"So what's changed? I mean, you look pretty good for a dead dude."

"Well, things change. I've changed."

"Well, obviously. I mean, I get that. But what now? You don't need the money, and Ceronie ain't got you by the short and curls anymore..."

"I think the XWF needs me," Shaun blurts out.

"It's nice to feel needed. I remember when me needing you was enough."

Shaun, concerned that he'd just hurt his brother's feelings, offers him a sympathetic look—which dissolves as soon as it appears when Nolan starts laughing.

"Just bustin' your balls, big brother!"

Nolan then pretends to be deflecting the daggers coming out of Shaun's eyes.

"Ahhh! No! Don't let it end this way! I'm melting! I'm melting!"

Soon they're both laughing and acting goofy.

"Hey, Shaun! It's... for you," Joey calls out from the front of the store.

"Be right there," Shaun calls back. He stops noogie-ing his brother, letting go of a headlock. Nolan follows Shaun up to the front.

They both stop walking as soon as they round the corner, and standing at the counter is a very beautiful, young woman, looking freshly sent from Heaven above in a form-fitted black ensemble that accentuates every curve of her bodacious body. How her daddy could let her leave the house in the skirt she's wearing is beyond me. If I had a daughter that looked half as good as her, I'd be stockpiling shotgun shells, I tell you what; be running boys off like it were my job, and business would be booming! I'd make a killing, no doubt about it... But all puns aside, baby girl be lookin' fiiiine.

(What do you mean I talk too much for a narrator?!)

"Hey, Joy. It's nice to see you, but I thought we were gonna do this over the phone?"

As Shaun approaches Joy to shake the hand she's extending out to him, Nolan steps through the dividers separating the employees from the customers, waltzes over to Joey—who is standing aloof behind the register—and nonchalantly helps pick his jaw up off the floor.

"Might wanna check your teeth for bugs. I think I saw a fly go in there."

I should probably let y'all in on why it's so bizarre that Joey has barely put two words together since Joy walked in. You see, normally Joey's got more game than the regular season of the NBA, but right now the only dribbling he can muster is a thin line of saliva trickling down his chin. Long story short: pretty girls make boys stupid. We already knew that though, didn't we? Want my educated guess? The boy is smitten. But what do I know, I'm just the overtalkative narrator, remember?

"I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd drop by. This must be your brother."

Nolan waves politely, a slightly goofy smile on his face.

"It's a joy to meet you, Miss Joy," he chuckles at his own wordplay. "Get it? 'Cause your name is Joy and... yeah."

"I got it," Joy nods and smiles. "Thank you."



Joy

"You'll have to forgive them—it's not every day we get an attractive woman in here. Not that I don't think you're more than just a pretty face. I mean, I've heard many great things about you. I just... I..."

See? Pretty girls make boys stupid. I told you so. I'd even wager a guess that right now all three would be trying to put a square block in a round hole if tested.

"Maybe we could just start over, perhaps?"

Shaun introduces everyone to Joy, his new coordinator.

"Nice to meet everyone," she turns to look at Shaun. "So I hear you're looking to squash the rumors that Sidney Grey stole your captaincy. Time we let the world know how you managed to assemble the team you're on for War Games."

"It was the only way to get Sid on my team. Originally the 'King' couldn't be drafted, so I had to think outside the box."

"And word from Theo Pryce would confirm that you had a special stipulation for stepping down as Captain, is that correct?"

"Uh, yeah. The deal was that no matter what, I'd still be on my team. Uh, the team I was suppose to lead, I mean."

Very clever. And what better way to make someone like Sidney Grey do your bidding than by letting them think they're the ones calling the shots? It's genius, really."

"That, and it takes a lot of the pressure off me and allows me to spend more time focusing on other things..."

"Such as?"

"Family and friends. Our little hardware store... oh, and laughing my ass off when War Games causes such a rift between Sarah Lacklan and Angelica Vaughn that they finally separate and go their own ways. All things I have to look forward to."

Joy's intuition kicks in.

"So which one are you crushing on?"

"Pardon me? What do you mean? I'm not 'crushing' on anyone," Shaun retorts, with finger quotes—his face starting to get red already.

"You named Sarah Lacklan and Angelica Vaughn specifically. Out of all the... participants... that are going to be at War Games, you named them. You obviously like one of them, and think lesser of the other. So which is it?"

"I haven't even thought about dating since my wife passed away, so I don't know what you're talking about."

"Okay, all right. We'll put a pin in that. For now. Let's move on..."

To Be Continued