

## **MORNING FOG (or BLAKE EDWARDS' REVENGE)**

The morning fog didn't burn off that day until almost noon. Good thing, too. The jackhammer in my head was significantly louder than usual. Must've been one helluva nite. Not that I'd remember. Gears aint turning. Wood aint burning. Felt like I was swimming in mashed potatoes; and not the moist, fluffy stuff momma used to make. I'm talking about that wet, lumpy shit you get at ye Old Country Buffet covered in some muddy coagulant with the viscosity of a 10 weight oil.

An empty fifth of Jack lay on the floor next to the couch. Half pint of his brother Jim tipped over on the coffee table keeping him company. I search the overflowing ashtray for the remnants of a roach I thought I had left for just this purpose. No dice. Looks like it'll be a little Hair of the Dog instead to get the ball rolling this cloudy morn.

Red-dry puffy eyes registered the medicine. Julie Andrews floats in with a spoonful of sugar to help me on my way. Fuck you! The hills are alive inside my head and I can't climb my way out of this hangover. She threw open the curtains and exposed my soul. 'Re – a drop of golden sun' pierced my retina, illuminating the platinum locks spilling out from behind the La-Z-Boy.

Aw, shit.

Duke heard the stirring and bounded onto the couch to give me a Lab-lick shower. Thanks, boy. Now, would you mind telling me who your date was last nite. He cocked his head sideways. Yeah, I know. You – good boy. Me – well, let's have a look.

I slowly slid off what should've been my final resting place (and someday will be) to maneuver a better view. Oh, Jesus. Fuck, no... a stellar blonde bathed in blue lay naked on the plush carpet now sponged in crimson from the festering gash in her abdomen. No, no... I reeled back in horror. Her hands and feet were tied. My red bandana gagged her mouth.

I took a slug of bourbon and lit a cigarette. Come on, man. Piece it together. Small's. The Martini Lounge. Aw – fuck. I checked out front. The Bastard wasn't there. Then I remembered that Skywalker drove. I called him to check the facts.

“Sky, what the hell happened?”

“Whadya mean, what happened. You said you were cool, so I left. Didn't you make it with that blonde?”

That's right. Sky and I were at a table at Small's when this blonde and her friend joined us – Adrianna and Jeff (I think his name was). She was a hot number in a micro-mini with the not so annoying habit of continually crossing and re-crossing her legs when she spoke. They didn't seem to be an item, but there was definitely something tweaked about this dude.

She was a Polish gal playing Mary Poppins for this Hollywood producer type and his stay at home, shop when she feels like it trophy wife. What they needed a nanny for didn't compute for me. But with that kind of money, calculators aren't a necessity. And who this Jeff character was, I didn't fully comprehend, either.

We were somewhere into our second round, thinking I had some play, when things took a murky turn. Sky had maneuvered the dude into some conversation, while Miss Poppins and I headed for the dance floor. I imagine it was at that point when I motioned to him that everything was ‘cool.’

What I was doing out there with two left feet was beyond me. And when I had to hold onto her for support, I should’ve known something was wrong. The flashing lights and pulsing beat coupled with the bump and grind sweat mama threw me into a blurry overload.

At least I didn’t find myself on the side of the road the next morning with pants around ankles and a sore ass. But the predicament I was in was sour enough. I finished off the bottle of Beam as I waited for Sky to arrive.

“Dude, what the fuck am I gonna do?” came the little girl squeal from my larynx.

“Take it easy, Hawk. Let’s talk this thing through,” replied the calm walker of skies.

Meanwhile, our pal Tom Cutty (who brought a certain skill set to the table due to his past as a Special Ops Ranger) was busy scanning the dead gal’s handprint into a portable he had brought.

“What happened after Small’s?”

“For some reason I remember the Martini Lounge, with that blonde and her pimp. And there was another guy there. Some older dude. Smoking a cigar. But that’s it.” I had shot my memory wad.

T.C. spoke up, “I’ll get this over to Pooch and have him run it through. See if he gets any hits. She’s probably the wife of that producer guy who hired those two idiots to get rid of her and set you up for the fall.”

“You’re shittin me, right? That’s way too fuckin easy.”

“Usually is. These fucks aren’t rocket surgeons.”

Tom always did have a way with permutations.

“Alright, Cutty. Assuming you’re on, how do I get my ass out of this sling?”

“Still got a number on that cop you used to see?”

“Wrongo, man. That went south a year ago, and I wasn’t on her happy-to-see-ya list.”

“Look, Hawk. You need a Blue Boy on your side who knows you don’t paint with blood. The fact that she fucked you and your old man shouldn’t be an issue right now.”

Tom always did have a way with tact, too.

“Damn, T. You always... Ah, never mind.”

I rifled through my old digits to drudge up the past. What’s that saying about letting sleeping dogs lie? Surprise – understatement, when Laura heard my voice. But she was a good soul and knew I was in deep.

Yeah, that's great the good guys got the bad guys. But now I'm on the good guys' radar. And in the sideline of work I'm in, that's not necessarily a good place to be.