

Fratricide

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FRATRICIDE - NIGHT

Army barracks. The barracks contains a bunk bed which is yet to be made; a table and a metal chair. On the table is a lamp and a box of cigarettes. The metal chair is upturned. A corporal, Norman, is lounging on the bottom bunk of the bed, smoking a cigarette. A private, Herbert, sits on the edge of the bed, disturbed. Another private, Jack, is sprawled on the floor and spasms every few minutes, coughs and appears to be on the brink of death.

HERBERT

What are we going to do about Jack?

NORMAN

He's already dead. He can't see, hear, smell or think as he used to.

Herbert goes to Jack and kneels beside him. He is both worried and frightened of Jack's ailment.

HERBERT

Hello Jack? Hello? Jack?

NORMAN

The only thing he can hear are the apes.

HERBERT

Jack? How many fingers am I holding up? How many fingers? Jack!

Herbert shakes him.

NORMAN

No use, he won't be able to see them Herbert. He may have gone blind.

HERBERT

What are we going to do about him?

Norman sucks on his cigarette and then blows out smoke in a bored, uninterested manner.

HERBERT

Norm, for fucks sake, put out that cigarette.

Norman slowly sits up from his lying position.

NORMAN

Herbert, I get it. He's your friend but sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind. The kindest thing to do is take him to the doctor and put him out of his misery.

Herbert returns to Jack.

HERBERT

Jack, come on now. Let's stop all this nonsense. Jack's eyes rolled back into his head. For Christ's sake snap out of it! There has to be another way, Norm.

NORMAN

Nope. Jack's dead. He died a few hours ago. The bumbling idiot in front of us is simply the shell of Jack. Can't be helped Herbert. Now, lets take him to the Doc.

HERBERT

I can't watch it, you know he makes you -- you know? You know he makes you watch it. What's it called? Surgical termination. Norm, we both know its murder.

NORMAN

Its like any other military treatment, surgical termination will help Jack's friends and family finally pick themselves up and move on. Jack's dead. He died a few hours ag-

HERBERT

--Say that again and I'll fucking punch you.

NORMAN

For fucks sake, Herbert. Lets put him out of his misery. He's not right in the head.

HERBERT

Norman don't make me come over their and smack you one--

Norman throws his cigarette aside and stands up. Jack's spasms become worse.

NORMAN

Herb, you've pushed the boundaries a little too far now. As your Corporal I'm now ordering you to take him to the doctor to be terminat-

HERBERT

-Fuck you!

NORMAN

Private Harrow stand down.

Jack wails in pain. Norman takes out a hand gun and points it at Jack.

HERBERT

Put it away, Norm. You're no murderer.

Jack gives one more wail of pain before Norman pulls the trigger. Jack dies.

Pause.

Herbert holds Jack's body close Norman puts his gun on the table, takes the pack of cigarettes and then lies back down. He lights another cigarette and smokes.

Pause.

HERBERT

Why did you just kill your brother?

NORMAN

Who?

HERBERT

Your brother.

NORMAN

I didn't.

HERBERT

Norm, you just shot Jack.

NORMAN

I know he was your friend, Herb, I know but we did the right thing.

HERBERT

But he was your brother, Norm. He was your fucking brother.

NORMAN

Yes.

HERBERT

Why did you just kill your brother?

Norman sighs out the smoke in his mouth.

NORMAN

I didn't kill him, Herby, I surgically terminated him - just like Doc would have done. It was for the best. We did the right thing.

Herbert sobs into Jack's body, Norman continues to smoke quite calmly.

NORMAN

Besides, Herbs, its not like he was my favourite brother. Tom is my favourite brother. Sorry Herbert.

HERBERT

Norman, you just killed Jack, you bastard. You just killed him. You killed him. You killed him. You fucking killed him.

NORMAN

We have discussed the semantics of what I did, Herby, lets not go over ground we have covered.

Herbert lunges towards the bed and grabs Norman he holds him by his shirt, close to his face.

HERBERT

You killed Jack, Norm. You killed him.

NORMAN

I terminated the shell of Jack. As I said. Jack died hours ago.

HERBERT

Herbert drops Norman and picks up the metal chair, throwing it across the room. He continues his frenzy until he ends up on the bed. Norman watches, unfazed.

NORMAN

It's OK Herbert. It's OK to be upset he was your friend and you killed him.

HERBERT

No you killed him Norman. You killed your brother.

NORMAN

Allow me to correct you a little Herb. I suggested you take him to the doctor for lethal injection - a quick humane death. Not murder. Treatment. I had to fulfill that role rather barbarically with a gun because you did not follow orders. It just so happened that the Doctor found a cure for Jack's illness this morning.

HERBERT

You didn't tell us. You didn't tell him.

NORMAN

No I didn't. I didn't want my brother to be a test subject, now did I? Anyway - yes, so by not following orders you essentially left the decision to me and not a professional about whether to use the cure or not. Silly, silly thing to do. You are a murderer Herbert. You killed my brother.

HERBERT

Norman, how am I to blame? You fucking killed him. You pulled the trigger. You shot him.

NORMAN

Because you did not follow orders.

HERBERT

You made no attempt to overpower me, you just sat...and smoked.

NORMAN

I allowed you to make a choice. You made the wrong choice. And Jack died as a result. But he died hours ago, as I keep telling you.

HERBERT

Pause. Norman picks up the cigarette packet which dropped onto the floor and lights himself another cigarette. Herbert runs and collects the gun from the table.

HERBERT

Kneel down on the floor.

NORMAN

Herbert, don't be a fool. Tidy up these barracks and put the gun on the table.

HERBERT

Kneel down on the floor.

NORMAN

Norman kneels, still very bored and arrogant.

HERBERT

Maybe I should shoot you? You should die because of Jack. You should die for him.

NORMAN

OK shoot me in the head three times, just to make sure. Go on, Herbs, try it. It feels quite good actually.

HERBERT

Don't play games, Norm. I have a loaded gun. I could kill you.

NORMAN

Yes you could, Herbs but then you would have killed two people tonight. Do you really want to deliver the news to mother that not one, but two of her beloved sons have been killed, Herbs, do you want that? Do you want to see her depressed? Do you want to see her hurting?

HERBERT

Shut up Norman. Shut up.

Herbert goes right up close and places the gun to Norman's temple. He then sits on the bedside, still with the gun pointing at Norman.

NORMAN

She will be so upset. You know how mum is with us. Jack was her favourite, then you, then Tom, then me. She never liked me.

HERBERT

Cos you are a murdering bastard!

NORMAN

I've murdered no one, Herb. You killed Jack cos you didn't follow orders. And now you are pointing a gun at me, your little brother. Why are you pointing a gun at me Herb? Surely you don't want to kill your little bro?

HERBERT

Norman, you killed Jack. You are no brother of mine.

NORMAN

Biologically we have the same parents, according to my book that makes us brothers Herby. Do you like me calling you that Herby?

HERBERT

Shut up - I don't want you to call me anything Norman. I don't want you to speak to me.

NORMAN

So Herby, how do you feel about killing Jacko?

HERBERT

His name is Jack.

NORMAN

In a way, Herbs, it was probably for the best.

HERBERT

How the hell was it for the best?

NORMAN

Well, we wouldn't have wanted to get his hopes up with this new drug they've been playing with. He would have suffered more in the long run, old Jacko.

Herbert gets Norman in a headlock and places the gun to his head.

HERBERT

His name is Jack.

Pause. Herbert paces around the room a little while. Norman places himself in a more comfortable seating position on the floor. Herbert rummages under the bed and finds a bottle of whiskey. He uncorks the bottle with his teeth and takes several swigs. He goes back to Jack's body and pours a little into his mouth.

HERBERT

Should take the edge off it all Jack. That a' boy, get it down. No - its alright, I don't want paying for it Jack. What's a drink between brothers eh?

Herbert props Jack up into a seated position. He gives him some more whiskey then places his arms around him.

HERBERT

This is the life old Jack, isn't it? Two brothers in the army together, fighting for Old Blighty eh? Nothing but the clothes on our backs and a bottle of the good stuff to keep us going. Signed up together, and we'll both die in battle together. Brothers. Forever.

Norman is smiling at Herbert's madness and begins to laugh a little.

NORMAN

He can't hear you Herbster. You killed him remember?

Herbert looks at Jack again and wails as if he has only just realised Jack is dead. He backs away from him in horror and drops the whiskey bottle onto the floor.

Norman stands up and gets another cigarette. He sits on the bed, still smiling.

NORMAN

Yes, you shot him. You got drunk, starting playing cards with him and shot him outside. See that bullet hole in his shoulder? You did that Herbs, well done bro.

HERBERT

You are lying. I'd never kill Jack. Never.

NORMAN

Why would I lie to you? You are my brother. We signed up together, we are best mates forever. But you killed Jack. Fact.

HERBERT

No.

NORMAN

Look me in the eyes now. Look me in the eyes. You killed Jack. You killed our brother. Shot him in cold blood.

HERBERT

He was ill. He was dying.

NORMAN

He had been given pills, Herbert. He was getting better. He was on the up.

Herbert is beside himself, in tears, flailing wildly. Norman is calm as always. Norman takes a small envelope from his pocket.

NORMAN

It was his birthday as well. I got his card here, I never forget Jack's birthday.

Norman walks to Jack's body and drops the card onto him.

NORMAN

Happy twenty-first Jacko.

Herbert breaks down, head buried in the floor, unable to believe what he thinks he has done.

NORMAN

So what happen's now?

Herbert sits up and wipes his face clean of tears. He kneels and puts his hands together.

HERBERT

Our father who art in heaven. Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as-- How does it go Norm? How does it go?

NORMAN

How does what go Herbert?

HERBERT

The Lord's Prayer.

NORMAN

It doesn't matter. He doesn't exist.

HERBERT

Who doesn't exist?

NORMAN

God. God doesn't exist.

HERBERT

Tell me how it goes.

NORMAN

No, Herbert. Killers don't deserve to pray.

HERBERT

Tell me how it goes damn you! Norman how does it go?

NORMAN

For killers? Oh dearest Satan, please have me cos I when I die I can't go to heaven cos I've broken a commandment. Oh dearest Satan, I am your humble servant. Oh dearest Satan, I am ever in you--

HERBERT

Stop it, Norman, Stop. Stop fucking around. Say it properly. Say it with me.

NORMAN

Ok Herb, I'll say it with you.

Norman gets the gun and then kneels down beside his brother, Herbert. He holds his hand and they speak the prayer together, Herbert taking his lead from Norman.

HERBERT AND NORMAN

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. for ever
and ever. Amen

Herbert holds out his hand.

HERBERT

Give me the gun, Norm.

NORMAN

Say please.

HERBERT

Norman.

NORMAN

Say please. Manners don't cost a penny.

HERBERT

Please can I have the gun.

Norman hands the gun and smiles.

NORMAN

See, that wasn't too difficult now was it?

HERBERT

No. Thank you Norman.

NORMAN

For what?

HERBERT

For being my brother.

Herbert puts the gun to his own head
and pulls the trigger, he falls to the
floor dead. Norman stands slowly and
sits on the bed, lights a cigarette and
lies down.

NORMAN

And thank you Herb, for being mine.