

## Chapter 9

*What happened to Missile-Tits, Frank, the oil billionaire, and the strip-mall preacher*

The big fat white man took one look at Frank and slapped Missile-Tits, a big fat white hand to the face. Then he grabbed the forearm she raised to probe her stinging cheek and hauled her, wailing in terror, over to one of his dining chairs. Sitting, he took her over his knee with a single-minded grimace. Seeing his wife assaulted thus, Frank found himself suddenly infused with new strength. The object that had struck his head, a big fat white ceramic bust bearing the visage and headgear of the master of the house, was lying on the ground near his feet.

Taking the cumbersome object in hand, Frank stood and approached the oil billionaire who was beating his wife. The fabric of the hat provided only nominal padding, so that when Frank's haymaker-swing collided with his temple, the billionaire's face and arms went slack, and his head fell back in the chair as Missile-Tits slumped to the floor. A bright red bloom began to spread across the white fabric of the hat, and soon a trickle of blood came to run down his cheek. Frank reached for Missile-Tits, cupping her arms and pulling her away, trembling and shaking and weeping.

Frank and Missile-Tits lay on the narrow floor, away from the blood and bile and urine which had now come to stain it, and moaned as they caught their breath. Suddenly, the old woman gave a hiss of panic and fled. The strip-mall church preacher, the very one who had worn the red robes and presided over the Act-of-Faith at which Frank had been beaten, silently entered the room and came to stand over them.

"YOU!" he squealed, directed at both of them. "Adultery and murder! I shall call the Sheriff at once!"

When Frank heard the word "Sheriff", every bruise he had incurred since the day he lost his mansion throbbed in rage and protest. Still panting, he climbed to his knees and grabbed the crease of the preacher's suit-pants.

"No!" He coughed, raising his ragged face to the preacher. "Please! You don't understand-". Frank's head fell back to his chest, coughing and sputtering. Disgusted, the preacher shook his affronted shin out at Frank, hoping to shoo him away.

Remembering the catastrophic retreat of Mr. Prisse-Buldge, Frank redoubled his grip. Now upset, the preacher squared his hips to his suppliant, and in so doing slipped in the bile that blessed the floor, thanks to Frank. His head hit the tile so hard they could both hear it crunch and slosh. If there were anything left in Frank's stomach, he would have retched it up.

Missile-Tits made a sound like her insides were turning themselves out, then began to mutter. "Oh fuck, oh god, oh fuck, oh my god." She keened and wept, and Frank went to her and knelt beside her and waited for her to meet his eye.

She did not, so he began. "We need to get out of here. What's your friend's name? She has to help us." Missile-Tits sniffed and snuffled and caught her breath, then nodded her head, and let Frank help her stand. When she steadied atop her feet, he began to lead her back down to the garage.

Missile-Tits stopped abruptly, one hand palm-out toward Frank. "Jewelry. Money. We'll need money. I have jewelry. Upstairs." Frank nodded, and followed, and watched as she climbed to a spacious boudoir well-complicated by Victorian vanities. She opened lids and drawers and began to stuff pockets and hand-bags.

Frank took the opportunity to peer into her thoughts. "How did you find me?"

"I was standing back-stage at the Act-of-Faith when you marched up to the front in that ridiculous sack. Up until that moment, I thought I never wanted to see you again. But when I caught a glimpse of your idiot-asshole face, I knew I just had to kick it!"

After a few moments, she nodded and led him back down and through the garage to the little carriage house, where the old woman was sitting in the driver's seat of her idling pick-up, weeping.

The instant their shadows loomed across the windshield, the old woman's hospitality face snapped into place, and she pointed it warmly at Missile-Tits.

"You'll sit right next to me, won't you dear?" She didn't wait for an answer, but shifted her gaze to the air between Missile-Tits and Frank. Her smile lit up. "You folks ever been to Corpus Christi?" They had not. Wearily, they climbed in to the truck and buckled up. The old woman stopped outside the little carriage house to hop out and secure the door, then drove them off into the night.

Frank wished the drive would last forever. Here he rode with Missile-Tits! Suddenly, having lost everything else felt like a trifle. Being with her like this had now become the most important thing in his world. He knew she was still angry, and probably would be forever. Yet he felt elated sitting next to her on the truck bench.

