

When it wasn't that unbearable...

Written by Donovan Russo

Sun rise. *A beautiful thing*, he used to think. Now, it all made him sick. Or at least feel sick. Blue skies, brown dirt... fresh air. It was all shit. None of it fucking mattered.

"I like it," his father nodded—keeping his eyes on the road. "It sounds like their old stuff, but it still has enough pop to make you tap your foot," he then glanced at him, trying to get a smidge of eye contact. "You listen at all?"

He kept his eyes focused on the passenger window, looking at everything the outdoors had to offer him: blue skies, brown dirt and fresh air.

"I get it," his father looked towards the road again. "You have a lot on your mind. That's fine. That's fair."

"Can we not do this?"

His father sighed and put the radio on. It was set to one of those sport stations. *The Jets lost two straight. But they have their starting quarterback returning next week against New England...* his father turned off the station.

"I know how much you hate me right now..."

He rolled his eyes as he grabbed his phone and ear buds.

"Wait, just wait," his father touched his shoulder. "Please, let me just say something."

"What else is there to say?" He turned to his father, his baby blue eyes seething with a cold rage. But like a deer in the headlights, his father froze up—unable to get the words out of his mouth. "Acting like everything's fine is fucking fake. It's phony," he continued to look at his father, eagerly looking to chew the old man's head off. "What's the fucking point?"

Rubbing his bushy-gray eyebrows, his father turned the radio back on. *Over 50 and in dire need of a boost in your sex drive? Try "Magic Flow" today!* He smacked the radio's knob, turning it off aggressively. They proceeded in silence for another ten miles.

Twenty minutes out, driving along as they were, the hood of the car began to smoke up. "Oh what the..." his father began to shout, pounding his fist on the steering wheel. He then pulled over and popped his hood—attempting to look like he somewhat knew how to fix the bloody thing: a '96 Pontiac. But it all looked like gibberish to him—just a bunch of wires and mechanical parts. Meanwhile, back in the car, his son spotted a cactus that was (give or take) 60 feet into the desert. He grabbed his bag and hopped out of the car.

"What happened?"

"Have to call Triple A," his father was looking at his phone. "I'm calling your place first, letting them know we're going to be a little late."

"*My place...*" He scratched the stubble that was on his face, as if those words were written a dozen times with nails on a chalkboard. In response, all his father could do was look at him like a pup with his tail between his legs, unsure of what he did this time. "Call it what it is," he shot his father a dagger and then walked over to the cactus.

His father went to dial the number but immediately hung up the phone, becoming too overwhelmed. This much stress wasn't good for his blood pressure—the bastard had been fighting a condition ever since he found out about his boy.

Over by the cactus, his son pulled out his solution, 10mg worth of fentanyl. He sat down and soaked it up into a syringe. He then took off his *Jordan* sweatshirt, which revealed the thousands of punctures that covered his arms. Without any hesitation, he tied a leash around his

arm and shot himself up. At this point in his life, despite being just 16 years old, he was tired of getting high. In fact, he didn't do it for the high. He did it to avoid all the hoopla that came along with *not* doing it. You know, the violent shitting, gut wrenching barf attacks, and witchery level hallucinations that you'd typically see in a Haitian-Vodou prayer group. Yeah, nothing like seeing Satan when your glued to the bowl, dropping that nastiest sewer garb of all time, in desperate need of a fucking fix. That shit sucks—no pun intended.

“Did I do a bad job?” His father now stood over him—his body shaking and forehead dripped with sweat .

“What?” The fentanyl was still kicking in.

“Was I too lenient? Too tough?” He raised his hands— seeking a genuine truth to his madness. “Am I to blame for all of this?”

He looked at this father: a man who once held him tight, shielding him from the world and all of its misery. And now, he saw just how bad this was hurting him: the tears in his eyes, the quivering of his lip, and the frog that was in his throat.

Am I a piece of shit, he thought to himself.

Well, he always questioned his character. But for some reason, he wanted to get his dusty ass up from the dirt to give him a hug. But first, he turned to the sun, as it was just waking for the day. The blue skies were also becoming more apparent—yet strangely enough, they weren't *that* unbearable. Furthermore, the dirt was still cold as well. But that just made it more comfortable for him to sit on. And the fresh air wasn't making him nauseous. In fact, he couldn't stop breathing it in. He was high, indeed he was. But that didn't matter. No words, no crying, just a hug was warranted. That's all that mattered.