

Hooker

Short Horror Tale No.2

By
Ian Thompson

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Hooker

Nigel Fawson had never been so drunk in his life. Neither had he ever taken drugs before.

Tonight, though, was a special night. Considering what had happened this afternoon, a little liquor – or even a lot – plus some cocaine, couldn't make his life any worse. Could it?

Fawson was fifty-two. His age showed in the wrinkles around his eyes and mouth, and in the greying of his formerly coal-black hair, but not in the lean physique of his six-foot-three body. A good diet, little alcohol and two evenings a week playing squash, had kept him in good condition and given him a strong level of stamina. Stamina had been essential for his job in Sales – the work had been long and hard, enough to drop some of his colleagues into depression. Promotions had only come after years of service and had been well-earned. Still, he had a family to provide for and he was utterly dedicated to them. He had grown to love Melissa more and more in their twenty-three years of marriage, and their four-year-old son Mike was a Godsend after so many years of trying for children.

This afternoon, at Two O'clock, his boss had called him into his office and handed him a redundancy cheque. Fawson had been stunned to his heart – it was utterly unexpected and the firm was doing well, it didn't need to make cutbacks. The answer was that the shareholders were demanding a five percent cut in staff to increase their profits, and Fawson was one of the unlucky five percent.

He'd walked silently past his colleagues, emptied his desk and driven home. To find his wife in bed with his best friend. Melissa hadn't even been upset by his discovery. Her words would ring in his mind for the rest of his life:

"What do you expect, Nigel? You're boring and you work too many hours. And you're dumb... Like, did you really think Mikey was your son?"

For a moment, he had considered killing the pair. They honestly deserved it. But he couldn't. He still loved her more than he loved life itself, despite her unfaithfulness. He loved Mikey too. So he had packed a bag, got into his car and left.

For the next hour, the thought of suicide had flitted in and out of his thoughts. He had nothing to live for, so why not?

In the end, he couldn't kill himself. His opinions on religion were mixed, but he saw life as a miracle and not something to be squandered. However, when he had entered the seedy downtown bar later that night, there had been a self-destructive glimmer in the back of his mind. Turning up there, in his business suit, he might attract the wrong kind of attention. Fawson could get mugged and killed. He might die in a bar fight... And if he did, he wouldn't care.

* * *

Fawson attracted the wrong kind of attention after an hour of steady drinking.

A rat-faced creep with long filthy hair, severe acne and a haven't-showered-for-weeks odour, dropped into a chair at Fawson's table. The former Sales Rep looked across and it took a moment for him to focus on the other man's face. The ugly rip in the newcomer's nose, from when a nose-ring had been torn out, made Fawson physically wince. Worse still, the stench of the stranger made him gag.

"Rough night, bud?" the creep drawled.

Fawson picked up the latest in a long line of whiskey shots and downed the final dreg.

"I'll drink to that. A night to make a guy appreciate how shitty life can be."

"A woman?" came the reply.

"Exactly." It was weird how Fawson felt suddenly willing to open his heart to this man. "Wife... soon to be Ex."

The creep winced. "Ohh, that'll hurt."

"Survived it yourself?" Fawson asked.

"Five friggin' times."

"Glutton for punishment, are you?"

"Got that damn right."

Fawson was trying to measure-up the stranger. In his drunken state, it wasn't easy. Plus, Fawson was used to dealing with businessmen over lunches, not reeking creeps in a dive of a bar. Surprisingly, the man was open and honest about what he wanted.

He pulled a small plastic baggie of white powder from a pocket and dangled it over Fawson's

array of empty glasses.

“Wanna feel good for a while?”

The words “I never do drugs” were on Fawson’s lips. He licked them, as if to wash the reply away, and said instead:

“What do I... you know... do with the stuff?”

A wide grin spread across the spot-etched face. “Let me show you. Hold out your hand, palm-down.”

The drunk obeyed and his companion tapped out a fine line of white dust behind his knuckles.

“Now snort it up. Snort it deep, man.”

It was a crazy situation. In a bar Fawson would have normally avoided just to ensure his survival. About to do drugs for the first time with a man he couldn’t trust, who hadn’t even told him his name. The reasoning part of Fawson’s mind should have screamed at him not to do it – but that part of him was wallowing in sorrow, drunk into stupidity and simply didn’t care anymore. Fawson took a deep sniff of the powder...

And his mind seemed to explode.

* * *

“Are you all right?”

The woman’s voice was a luxury to Fawson’s ears. Soft, gentle, utterly feminine and rich in kindness.

Fawson found his head nestled in his arms on the same table where he had been drinking. He drew his head up a few inches and his senses swam, luring him back towards oblivion.

“Holy shit.”

A chair squeaked as it was moved and Fawson heard someone sit. A waft of cheap fragrance entered his nostrils and he remembered the woman’s voice. *Had that been just now? Or yesterday? Or had it been a dream?*

“God, what have I done to myself?” he croaked. Fawson ran a hand through his hair. It was saturated in sweat and his skull felt hot.

“Honey,” the voice came again. “Just be grateful you only took one hit. And it was a tiny one at that.”

He raised his head further, amazed at how heavy it had become. The darkened bar seemed glaringly bright.

“I only had one... ‘hit?’”

She laughed. The new sound was musical and alluring.

“My friend, I was watching, just in case Shifty tried to lift your wallet. He didn’t have to. After one hit, you gave him a bunch of notes and he left in a hurry.”

“I bought his baggie?”

“No... I think you paid him to take it away, before you killed yourself.”

“I don’t remember. It must have been powerful stuff.”

The girl’s eyebrows rose. “Powerful? His shit is known to be ninety-nine percent talcum powder. If you hadn’t been so drunk, you’d probably have just sneezed and asked him what was supposed to happen.”

Fawson turned his head a little in her direction, but gave up. It was hard enough just staying awake.

“So, I guess I’m a failure as a wannabe drug-addict.”

“Yeah, you struck out. Good for you.” There was a suggestion of genuine care in the last three words.

“At least I can hope to make a decent alcoholic.”

“If that’s what you really want. Getting drunk is easy – any asshole can do it.”

He made a mammoth effort to raise and turn his head in the direction of the lovely voice. The task drained at his consciousness and made him feel woozy – yet it was all worthwhile. Whoever his companion was, she was the most beautiful woman Fawson had ever laid eyes upon. He estimated her to be in her early twenties. Her pale skin made him think of cream and honey; it was flawlessly smooth and amply revealed by her attire. Her long, golden-blond hair shone silky and lustrous. The rounded shape of her face drew his gaze across her inviting red lips, then over a slender nose and graceful cheekbones, to eyes that were large and very dark. Those eyes seem to hook him – to draw him in closer and fix his eyesight. Fawson found himself blinking hard to break the spell of the woman’s beauty. His peripheral vision took in the rest of his companion. Her physique was

somewhere between slim and ample, a concoction of long limbs and subtle curves. All she wore was a strapped-top white blouse, a short dark green skirt and high heels. She wasn't even wearing a necklace or earrings, and didn't need them to enhance her looks. Over her right shoulder was a small black bag.

The words, "You're breathtaking," stumbled out of Fawson's mouth before he could stop them.

She smiled – obviously hearing what he said – and replied: "Sorry, what did you say..?"

"You're... very kind," he lied. "Keeping an eye out for me and coming over to see how I was."

"My pleasure." She extended a hand. "I'm Valerie."

"Nigel." He shook her hand very gently, concerned that in his drunken state he might clench too hard. "And the pleasure's all mine."

She smiled again, and Fawson felt as if he was bathing in the glow of her expression.

"So, you willing to buy a friendly girl a drink?"

"Absolutely," Fawson said. He put his hands on the table to lever himself upright.

"Hey, slow down or you'll fall down," Valerie scolded. "Gimme a ten-spot and I'll go get us what we need."

He didn't hesitate. In seconds, she was sashaying her way to the bar. Fawson couldn't resist glancing at the slinking motion of her walk; he noticed at the same time how tall Valerie was – probably only four inches shorter than himself.

Valerie returned, but not with more alcohol. She bore a mug of steaming black coffee for Fawson and a dainty cup of cappuccino for herself. A plate of cheese sandwiches was also placed down in front of Fawson.

"Drink the coffee and eat up," she instructed, "if you want to feel better."

Fawson eyed the sandwiches and frowned slightly.

"I usually have rye..."

"Well, this is the 'house special' bread. It's called 'stale'. Eat up."

Overwhelmed by her beauty and personality, Fawson surrendered. He ate and drank, then rushed off to the bathroom to throw up. Ten minutes later, he returned – feeling a lot better.

Surprisingly, Valerie was still there.

* * *

Valerie's eyesight had followed him from the toilet exit back towards their table. Fawson realised she must have determined how much steadier his balance and coordination were – he wasn't stumbling like a drunk anymore, just a little unsteady on his feet.

Fawson came to a halt at the table.

"Would you like me to get you another drink?" he asked.

She shook her head. For a moment, her long hair flew, then it cascaded around her shoulders to land perfectly back in place.

"Why," the girl said, "you heading for another shot of whiskey?"

"God, no." He sat down, smiling for the first time since the impromptu call into his boss's office. "Never again. I just thought you might like a glass of wine or something..."

"No. I don't drink alcohol. I need to keep my head on straight, in my game."

"In your game?" Fawson asked.

She leaned forward and whispered, as if in some conspiracy: "I'm a call girl. Hooker. Pro... Didn't you know?"

Feeling dumb, Fawson said, "No. You don't look... well, you know..."

"There's a sentence trying to claw its way out, isn't there?" she teased.

He shrugged. Something else came to him. "When you came over, were you..?"

"Trying to pick you up?" She giggled wildly. "No, I usually try for conscious men – it's easier. Checking on you was my good deed for the day."

"And thanks again."

"Besides..." Now she mimicked his earlier fumbled speech: "You don't look... well, you know... the type who'd pay."

Fawson was a little confused. On the way back from the bathroom, he had had ideas of talking to Valerie about his lousy day. Mostly about how cruel his beloved wife had been. He had anticipated a few minutes of comfort in speaking to her and in her replies. Now...

"Actually." Valerie's next word shattered Fawson's thoughts. "I'd better be going. Girl's gotta earn her rent, you know."

She stood up and Fawson felt his heart sink. A smile from the girl seemed to magnify his

disappointment.

“You take better care of yourself, Nigel,” Valerie told him. “And get out of this neighbourhood.”

Fawson had no idea, but his reaction was eagerly anticipated by his companion.

“Wait,” he said, and added in a lower tone: “Maybe I am the kind of guy you’re after. In fact, I’d love to be him.”

Another of her sweet smiles.

“Okay, come on. My place isn’t far.”

Fawson left with her, his sadness and bitterness subdued by tingling excitement and joy.

The bait had been chosen, the line cast, and the prey was hooked. All that remained was to draw it in...

And feed.

End Of Sample

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